

Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers
Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading

by

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B.A., University of Coimbra, 1986
B.Ed., University of Toronto, 1991
M.Ed., Charles Sturt University, 2010

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Preservice teachers of reading develop their beliefs and understanding of reading pedagogy in diverse ways. While they do gather some knowledge and understanding from their university preparation courses and their practicum experiences in classrooms, a less transparent source of emerging understandings of reading pedagogy is their own experiences with reading instruction as students. Using a qualitative case study methodology, this dissertation study investigated how three preservice teachers interested in early childhood education developed understandings of reading pedagogy. Data collected included three interviews; two prompted reflective writings on their evolving understandings; observation in the participants' reading processes course; and an interview with the course instructor. Findings indicated that preservice teachers' biographies influenced both their understanding of how to teach reading and their attitudes toward it. Also, they favoured practicum experience over university coursework as a source of knowledge, and experienced tensions when their own beliefs contradicted the ideas espoused in the university course. In general, preservice teachers' beliefs and experiences prior to starting their teacher education program caused resistance toward research-based theories and practices related to reading. Findings imply that teacher educators need to be explicit in providing many opportunities for their students to discuss and make sense of their epistemological understandings in relation to areas of tension with reading pedagogy.

Keywords: reading, beliefs, preservice teachers, teacher education, teacher preparation

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Dedication

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CHAPTER ONE

A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos. If we are unable to understand, we often turn to tradition.

Jack Mezirow, 2000

Introduction

For the last 30 years, I have worked in the field of education as an elementary teacher, mentor teacher, and as a preservice literacy teacher educator. I have experienced first-hand, and observed in others, the impact of our prior experiences in learning to read on our instructional choices as teachers of reading. Those personal experiences suggest that teachers, and new teachers especially, make instructional decisions and plan learning experiences in their classrooms based mostly on what they enjoyed, or did not enjoy, as students (Debreli, 2016; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). The influence of prior literacy experiences on teachers' beliefs is well-documented (Lundeberg & Levin, 2003; Richardson, 1996, 2003; Sulentic-Dowell, Beal, & Capraro, 2006). Teachers' beliefs influence their orientations towards the teaching of reading, choice of resources, and instructional strategies they use in the classroom. These choices have an impact on students' learning opportunities and achievement (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Muis & Foy, 2010). Many connect student achievement to the well-being of society (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). Therefore, the scope of the impact of teachers' beliefs on student achievement, and the importance of that achievement to a well-functioning society suggest that beliefs should be a central concern of teaching and teacher education (Ammon & Levin, 1993; Kagan, 1992; McGlynn-Stewart, 2016; Shulman, 1986; Yero, 2010). Thus, examining teacher beliefs about reading instruction is an increasingly important area of study (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018).

Preservice Literacy Preparation - Current Context

Universities offer a comprehensive preparatory stage to guide aspiring teachers' beliefs towards the adoption of effective, research-based instructional practices. In Canada, university preservice teacher education, through varied models and pathways, provides the first step in the preparation of new teachers with the goal of equipping well-qualified literacy teachers. Crocker and Dibbon (2008) posited that the most frequently mentioned theme in Preservice Teacher Education program statements was some variation of "producing competent professionals" with an emphasis on content knowledge. The emphasis on preparing preservice teachers in content knowledge is a result of the position that such knowledge forms the basis for quality practice (Guerriero, 2017; Schempp, 1995). Children have the right to learn to read with the guidance of well-prepared literacy teachers, who are knowledgeable in the ways in which children learn to read and therefore can meet their individual needs (International Literacy Association [ILA] & National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2017). In the national context, the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNET) was formed to coordinate provinces' efforts to improve Canadian students' literacy skills (CLLRN, 2009). To accomplish this goal, the network recommended that teacher education programs prepare competent teachers with the content knowledge necessary to provide reading instruction for all students focussing on: "(1) print awareness; (2) decoding, including letter knowledge, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and understanding the alphabetic principle, (3) vocabulary; (4) reading comprehension; and (5) fluency" (CLLRN, 2009, p. 13). *The Literacy Teacher Preparation [Research Advisory] Report* endorsed the position that teacher preparation programs that place an emphasis on this content knowledge will equip more effective teachers of literacy (ILA & NCTE, 2017). The emphasis on content knowledge as the basis of quality preparation in

instructional literacy teaching practices is problematic. Content knowledge in literacy is very important, however, it does not automatically equate to highly effective literacy teaching (Bandura, 1986; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2017; Reutzel & Clark, 2011). Furthermore, just because preservice teachers (PSTs) are exposed to information and best practices during their preparation does not directly link to the adoption of best practices into their teaching repertoire (Skott, 2015). Preservice teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions about their knowledge is an important factor (Spear-Swerling, Brucker, & Alfano, 2005) in determining how much motivation, effort, and persistence they put into their teaching and into furthering their professional development (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Additionally, self-perceptions guide their willingness to be more open to accept new information and to experiment with new instructional techniques (de la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007; Massey, 2001; Skott, 2015). Bandura (1977) refers to self-perception and belief in one's knowledge and capabilities as self-efficacy (i.e., belief in one's capabilities to act in a way to produce positive results). If educators want PSTs to use and adopt new knowledge and pedagogies in literacy instruction they need to support PSTs in developing self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) so that they feel confident in implementing and incorporating these activities into their pedagogical repertoire. Without this emphasis on fostering self-efficacy it is unlikely that PSTs will use new techniques (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997). Only when teacher candidates believe they are adequately prepared to implement new pedagogy will they do so (Smylie, Bay, & Tozer, 1999).

Despite teacher educators' desire to prepare teachers in current and well-researched best practices in literacy teaching, their effectiveness in changing pre-existing beliefs about the teaching of reading has been discouraging (Ajayi, 2010; Alger, 2009). This presents another

important challenge to teacher educators. There is strong evidence that PSTs' pre-existing beliefs can be a source of resistance during their preparation (Al-Hazza, 2017; Kist & Pytash, 2015).

These beliefs, formed before their arrival at university, may provide important, but uncomfortable tensions in their developing understanding of how to teach reading to students in contemporary classrooms. K-12 students today are increasingly diverse and technologically literate, so preservice teachers' literacy beliefs that may have been adequate before are no longer adequate (Fransila & Klassen, 2013). It is the element of resistance and the ensuing tension it creates that passionately interests me and has brought me to doctoral studies. I argue that it is critically important to explore the processes that preservice teachers' beliefs undergo as they become teachers of reading. Only with an understanding of teachers' developing beliefs about literacy learning can we then design conditions in the university preparation stage that will support new teachers in their quest to become effective and responsive literacy teachers.

The motivation for this research arose primarily from the tensions experienced in my own personal journey in becoming a teacher of reading. These tensions emerge, in particular, from the realization of the superficial impact a reading methods course in my teacher preparation program exerted on my prior beliefs about the teaching of reading. In a subsequent part of chapter one, I (1) highlight the significance of the study, (2) discuss the purpose of the study, and (3) present the research question that guides my inquiry. I believe that by describing and understanding my own journey in becoming a teacher of reading, I will be better equipped to conduct this research, bracket my assumptions, and better understand how others become teachers of reading.

My Journey: Becoming a Reader

I have loved reading for as long as I can remember. Some of my best childhood memories involve books. The weekly trip to the tiny public library in my hometown in Portugal

provided me with literary treasures that introduced me to people, faraway places, and exciting adventures. Everyone in my family knew how much I loved reading and were grateful for not having to think too hard about what to gift me on special occasions. When I was in elementary school, I greatly anticipated my grandma’s visit every other weekend—with her would come the next book in the Enid Blyton’s *Famous Five* or *Secret Seven* series. With the new book in my hand, I would run to hide under my mom’s sewing machine table to avoid being found and interrupted. In this tight space, I would savour the new adventure in one continuous reading. I eagerly looked forward to the final chapter of each book so that I could drool over the delectable breakfast that was served to the four young characters as a “thank you” for their help in capturing the “bad guys.”

My parents were not avid readers, but they respected and encouraged my passion for



Figure 1.1. First-grade reader

reading. I remember my mom buying and giving me the required reader for first grade on the morning of my first day of school, which also happened to be the day I turned six. She placed it gently on my pillow and I woke up to the sight of this orange-cover book (see Figure 1.1). This is one of the warmest memories I carry with me about my childhood. This gesture, to me, showed how much my mom cared about what I valued. I was fortunate that learning to read had come easily and I was able to read before starting school. Sadly, I cannot remember anyone

teaching me to read or how I learned. I just remember being able to read. So, it was not surprising that, by the end of that first day of school I had read the first-grade reader from cover

to cover. I still cringe when I remember, in those first school days, being scolded by my teacher when she saw me skipping a few pages ahead during a lesson. It was expected that we follow the reader page by page throughout the year, regardless of our individual reading skills. Fortunately, I had the freedom to borrow any book I wanted from the town's library and read them during recess and outside of school. This freedom helped me to bear the limitations that I felt in the classroom.

In spite of these limiting early school experiences, I have always thought about that first reader with great affection. I regret giving my book away a few years later. I have since bought a new edition but it is not my very own first-grade reader, the one that my mom so lovingly placed on my pillow, the one I woke up to on my first day of school. I cannot remember much about the readers for the subsequent years, but there are a few details that stayed with me about this one because of the strong emotions and memories attached to my first school experience. I recall that this first-grade reader displayed a bottom-up perspective on reading instruction. The first few pages were devoted to individual sound study (see Figure 1.2): first the vowels, then diphthongs. After, there were consonants and blends mixed in with the vowel sounds previously learned (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

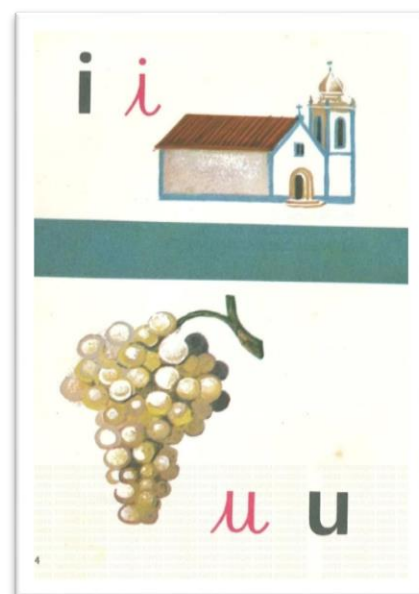


Figure 1.2. Vowel study

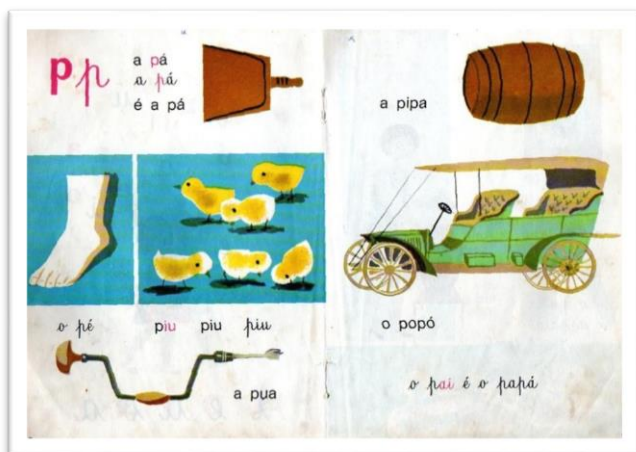


Figure 1.3. Consonant study



Figure 1.4. Digraph study

The different sounds were associated with a picture and several short words that used the sounds for practice. Those words were then used in a few somewhat unrelated sentences. The letter spotlighted was written in fuchsia in order to stand out from the black font. Halfway through the book, the simple sentences evolved into short passages that got progressively longer.

Another aspect I remember about my first-grade reader is the font size. It started large and by the end of the book the font was very small (see Figure 1.5). I believe it was to make us feel how far we had come as readers—that we could read longer passages, in small print, and that we did not need as many pictures. I experienced all those feelings in that first day of school. Teachers knew I read well, with fluency and expression, and would often ask me to read passages aloud to the class. I enjoyed doing this then and still do now when reading aloud to my students.



Figure 1.5. Longer text towards end of Reader

My other memories about the teaching of reading are that instruction and discussion were completely teacher-centred. Consistent with the pedagogical beliefs of the 1970s, teachers taught the nationally mandated curriculum and used it to set the pace of instruction. In Portugal, at the end of each grade, there was an exam that encompassed the material covered and the results would determine if we passed to the next grade. As far I can remember, student choice in reading and in completing assignments did not occur. I do not recall any instances in my schooling, including undergraduate literature studies at university in the mid-1980s, where I was given the option of selecting a book for an assignment. Throughout my school years, including my literature courses in university, reading was taught as an exercise of obtaining information and/or extracting the author's meaning from the text. There seemed to be only one right answer. Reading and writing, as school subjects, encompassed, for the most part, reading a book or short passage and then answering related comprehension and grammatical questions and completing a related composition. I became proficient at doing this and derived great satisfaction from the good marks that I received. These exercises of grammar and "meaning-getting" were like an enjoyable game, one which I still enjoy today. In spite of this comfort with school and its reading requirements, I now realize that my reading experiences outside of school were the ones that nourished and kept the love of reading alive for me. From my current perspective on literacy learning I wondered how difficult and tedious it might have been for my school peers to experience such disconnect between their own lives, their interests, and their school learning experiences.

My Journey: Becoming a Teacher of Reading

When I became an elementary teacher in 1991, I was determined to share my love of reading, and inspire the same, with the students in my care. A significant motivation in becoming

a teacher was the opportunity to fill my own classroom with wonderful books and read aloud to my students. A university reading methods course in 1990, at a prominent university in Ontario, Canada, highlighted *whole language* practices as the desired context for teaching students to learn to read and write. This approach had grown from the ideas proposed by Goodman in his 1967 article, “Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game,” as a preferred way of approaching the teaching of reading instead of a phonics approach to the teaching of reading prevalent in North America at that time. A phonics approach privileged the direct teaching of letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns as the way to teach students to read. Rudolf Flesch had made a compelling argument for this method in his 1955 book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. In opposition to this tradition, the way whole language was treated in my university reading class—or at least the main message that I took away—suggested that creating and immersing students in a literature-rich environment was the condition required for all students to love reading and that would make learning to read easier. Reading should be taught in a meaningful context, and skills like phonics should not be taught in isolation. In principle, I agreed with this position, particularly with the use of great literature to share with students. Perhaps this was because the practice already matched my own prior beliefs. That context of learning to read nevertheless differed significantly from mine and so I was skeptical that the minimal role of developing phonemic awareness, grammar, and comprehension study would make the whole language approach effective in teaching all students to read.

Even though I held a great deal of skepticism about whole language as the teaching method that would help all students to learn to read, I was able to regurgitate what information was needed to successfully complete assignments and do well academically. It was not until I had my first practicum placements in a grade 2 and later in a grade 4 class, and I saw first-hand

how the concept of whole language was interpreted and implemented, that I rejected it. Early in my teaching (albeit with limited experience on which to base my judgements), I did not see reading instruction taking place, except for the teacher reading a book or poem aloud to students and giving them time to look through books on their own during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time. There was occasional calling attention to some sight words but there was no study about the relationship between sounds and letters/letter combinations. I was surprised that many students in grade 2 could not read. In writing, students used invented spelling and teachers were reluctant to point out spelling errors. When working with the students in the grade 4 class, I had difficulty deciphering their writing because it was riddled with so many spelling mistakes. I cannot remember if the content of their writing was rich because I was so distracted by the lack of conventions. I strive to consider all aspects of each educational movement before deciding which aspects to integrate into my teaching and which to leave to the side. In hindsight, what I considered positive aspects were often just those that agreed with my beliefs. As a result, I felt that there had to be a balance and that whole language, as I saw it being interpreted and implemented, was not supportive of all students' learning needs and preferences.

Granted, some students were reading and writing very well, but I believe that some students will always learn to read and write regardless of instruction, and that there will always be students who find school-based literacy learning challenging. In my own practicum placements during my teacher preparation phase, I observed many students who struggled with reading. The premise behind the whole language movement was to create integrated and authentic learning experiences for students (Pearson, 1989). Through integration, students could understand how concepts/subjects connected, and through reading authentic high-quality literature, students would be engaged to read more. In my own (limited) experience, I observed

no explicit teacher modelling of reading strategies. As a result, I did not believe that just being read to and being surrounded by books was going to provide them with the instruction they needed to become competent readers and writers. I vividly remember comparing these experiences against my own experiences in learning to read and thinking that those students were lacking important components in reading instruction, such as direct instruction of grammar and phonics, and missing a great deal of practice in comprehension exercises. I saw many students struggling to read at their grade level and felt that they would benefit from explicit teaching in these activities; mainly because I thought they were fun and I associated them with developing good readers. Looking back, I can see how my early reading experiences were used as filters to take in new information from my university courses and practicum placements about the teaching of reading—I believe I took in those aspects which were more in line with my existing frame of reference while rejecting other aspects.

My Journey: Teaching Reading

It is perhaps not surprising then that, based on my own early experiences, my teaching style consisted of instructional choices based on what I had enjoyed, what I thought had made me a good reader, as well as what I would have wanted more of as a student: reading aloud to my students with enthusiasm, providing access to a variety of books in the classroom, and allowing them choice about their reading material. I also included opportunities for explicit sound, word, grammar, and comprehension study. While I praised and valued creativity, I also taught short lessons on writing conventions and encouraged students to use them in their writing. I regarded and articulated these choices as theory, as the way that reading should be taught.

It has taken me many years, including graduate studies, to develop these insights into the motivations for my instructional choices. I am surprised at the weight that both my feelings

towards certain strategies and activities, as well as empirical evidence, had on my beliefs about the “best way” to teach reading. More importantly, as a current undergraduate literacy instructor, I am even more surprised that I had rejected activities and strategies shared by an authority “voice,” such as during my teacher preparation program, because they did not “fit” my schema of how reading should be taught. However, after many years of teaching experiences, professional development opportunities such as participation in the Reading Recovery® training programme, instructional dilemmas, and reflection on my own teaching practices, I gradually began to shift my reliance on my early beliefs to embrace best practices according to research evidence in reading instruction. My insights into my own development as a teacher of reading have developed, then, from reflection on questions such as: What do I believe about the teaching of reading? How are these beliefs different than what I used to believe? What were my beliefs about the teaching of reading in the early years of my career? What were the influences on my views? Why were those views so strong? Why did my university teacher preparation program only succeed in inspiring minimal surface-level changes to my repertoire of activities, but not transform some of my core beliefs about the teaching of reading?

In the later years of my teaching career, I mentored preservice students in my own primary classroom while they completed the practicum component of their teacher education program. These preservice students came from varied teacher education programs within Canada and internationally. In my coaching of preservice teachers in my classroom, I observed that they arrived prepared with unit plans that included a good repertoire of literacy activities. Preservice teachers indicated to me that the approaches and activities in those unit plans had been inspired by university coursework. Throughout practicum, I also noticed that their teaching approaches reflected the influence of my classroom environment and my guidance. What is noteworthy is

when I probed further into their beliefs about the teaching of literacy, such as by asking how they thought reading was taught and assessed, it was not unusual to have preservice students refer to their own school experiences in learning to read and write in order to articulate, illustrate, and give examples about the teaching of reading. I had expected them instead to refer to information shared during their university literacy methods courses. This mirrored my own past experience as a preservice teacher. While PSTs' articulation of how reading was taught still reflected a strong influence of their early experiences in their own schooling, observing them teach during practicum, I noticed them use pedagogical practices privileged by the university teacher education programs and me, their mentor teacher. To a large extent, I supposed that due to the evaluative nature of a practicum, preservice teachers felt required to use instructional practices and routines valued by the university supervisor and their mentor teacher.

Throughout the two decades of my own classroom teaching experience, I have often contemplated the ways in which beliefs about how reading occurs influence teachers' pedagogical decisions. Such considerations, combined with a strong desire to contribute to strengthening preservice teachers' formative years, led me to enrol in a Ph.D. program. During my doctoral studies, I studied the research literature to further understand the role of beliefs and found that others held a similar view that teachers' beliefs are deeply connected to their practice (e.g., Calderhead, 1996; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2009; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Woolfolk-Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). As a result, I was curious to explore how PSTs negotiated their existing beliefs with information and experiences during their preparation. I wished to explore whether a deeper understanding of this process in becoming a teacher of reading contributed to creating more transformative experiences for teachers during their preparation to teach reading.

My Journey Continues: Preparing Teachers of Reading

During my graduate studies, and while working as an instructor in undergraduate-level literacy methods courses, I became particularly interested in the beliefs and attitudes of my students towards early reading processes and pedagogies in the primary grades. I wondered: Have these students ever had opportunities to reflect and discuss their own beliefs and attitudes about the teaching of reading? Did they recognize how those beliefs and attitudes might shape their instructional practice and influence their own students' learning experiences? It was with this thought in mind that I began to have my undergraduate education students write a short reflection at the beginning of our course regarding their beliefs and emotions about reading and the teaching of reading. Afterward, when informally discussing their reflections, students have shared that they were unaware that they had arrived at their university teacher preparation program already holding such a strong set of beliefs. Many expressed surprise when they uncovered the experiences that were at the base of their beliefs. Many students had not made the connection between beliefs based on their early literacy experiences in the home, at school, and in their communities; not surprisingly, they accepted their beliefs as truth. In these informal class discussions, many students referred to their early school experiences and indicated a desire to replicate activities and approaches that they had enjoyed as students themselves, while also articulating what they would never do as teachers, relating those choices to perceived negative personal experiences. These discussions contributed to my understanding of the role of experience, belief, and practice; specifically, that our experiences and associated emotions impact our beliefs, which, in turn, influence our instructional choices. As a new teacher of reading, I had also included, in my professional practice, approaches that I had enjoyed and made me feel successful. In these early years, my choices did not take into consideration best practices

corroborated by research evidence. Some researchers (i.e., Barnyack & Paquette, 2010) posited that after university method courses, beliefs remained largely unanalysed, “intuitive and imitative” providing preservice teachers with “default options,” a set of tried and tested strategies which they can revert to in times of indecision or uncertainty. I see this “teaching the way you were taught” process in becoming a teacher of reading as problematic and challenge teacher educators to respond to this default mode by opening up discussions about teachers’ epistemologies. Also, of consideration in becoming a teacher of reading in the 21st Century is the highly diverse, multimodal, and digitally-rich environment in which educational professionals work. Subsequently, teachers require a growth mindset (Dweck, 2014) and a disposition toward lifelong learning. There is a substantial body of research that indicates teacher educators’ best efforts in university coursework has not been significantly successful in changing preservice teachers’ pre-existing beliefs (Altan, 2006; Barnyack & Paquette, 2010; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Kist & Pytash, 2015; Massengill, Mahlios, & Barry, 2005; Wall, 2016). On a more encouraging note, there is also evidence that university preparation can have an impact in changing preservice teachers’ beliefs (Asselin, 2000; Brenna & Dunk, 2018; Clark, Jones, Reutzel & Andreasen, 2013; Shaw, Dvorak & Bates, 2007; Sheridan, 2016), but it requires careful attention to unpacking preservice teachers’ beliefs at ongoing points in the journey to becoming a teacher of reading.

Significance of the Study

Student reading achievement is greatly influenced by teacher practices, which are anchored in teachers’ beliefs about effective reading pedagogy (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2017; Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; ILA & NCTE, 2017; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Rowan, Correnti & Miller, 2002). Future teachers

need opportunities to make sense of the origin and evolution of such beliefs while they are learning about research-based approaches and strategies in the teaching of reading. There is a small body of literature on the influence of coursework on preservice teachers' beliefs, but few studies that examine how preservice teachers integrate and expand their understanding of reading pedagogy drawing on their early experiences and beliefs, their course preparation, and their practicum experience. A deeper understanding of the process through which PSTs develop their understanding of teaching reading might inform preservice teacher preparation to effectively disrupt PSTs' narratives about how to be a teacher of reading.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how three preservice teachers developed their understanding of how to teach young children to read. To that end, I (1) investigated PSTs' initial beliefs about teaching reading and probed for influences on those beliefs; (2) explored and examined preservice teachers' beliefs and how they connected with the varied influences during their preparation, specifically after participation in a reading processes course and their last practicum placement; and, (3) inquired into how those experiences contribute to preservice teachers' developing "theories" of how to teach reading.

Research Question

My research question is: What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?

In summary, in this first chapter I described the experiences, motivations, and significance of my study in relation to my dissertation topic. I started by previewing the research on teachers' beliefs about how to teach reading and how these beliefs influence their teaching.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation contains four additional chapters. Chapter Two focuses on articulating the theoretical frameworks that inform this research, including social constructivist and transformative learning theories. It also details research literature that served as the foundation for this study. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this investigation and provides a description of how the study was conducted. Chapter Four describes the data analysis process and presents the findings. Chapter Five focuses on the cross-case analysis and discussion of themes that emerged from the study. The chapter concludes with discussion of the limitations of the study followed by recommendations for: future research, teacher educators, and teacher education literacy programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the research literature focusses on my theoretical orientation to research and learning, followed by a review of the literature in three distinct research areas: (1) evolving definitions of literacy and implications for teachers; (2) clarification of the constructs of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge and their influence on teachers' orientations towards reading instruction; and, (3) investigation of the influences on preservice teachers' beliefs as a result of their university preparation.

Theoretical Framework

My epistemological beliefs have been heavily influenced by theories on social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1996). Social constructivism recognizes that reality is subjective, experiential, multiple and contextual, and emphasizes how individuals make meaning of their experiences in relation to others and their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Mezirow's (1996) work on transformative adult learning theory also contributes a very useful lens through which to explore how individuals can change their thoughts and beliefs. Such a process involves how to think critically about one's beliefs, as well as how to develop reflective judgement regarding those beliefs, values, feelings, and self-concept.

Social constructivism.

Through others we become ourselves.

Lev Vygotsky, 1978

Social constructivism is rooted in Vygotsky's (b.1896-d.1934) work on sociocultural theory. A Russian psychologist, Vygotsky proposed a perspective of development that accounts for the essential role that groups and culture play in the development of knowledge in the

individual. He was influenced by the constructivists, especially by his contemporary Piaget (b.1896 –d.1980) and the latter's theory of cognitive development. Following a constructivist orientation, Piaget (1970) theorized that individuals were active organisms seeking meaning by constructing their own understanding and knowledge, which was constructed from the interaction between individuals' prior knowledge and experiences, and the connections they made as they interacted with new experiences and interpreted the information from the environment around them. Piaget's theory placed an emphasis on the individual and believed that learning could be separated from its social context. Vygotsky (1978) agreed with the perspective of individuals being an active participant in their learning, but was critical of the absence of social and cultural influences in Piaget's theory of development; instead, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the collaborative nature of learning and argued that learning could not be separated from the context in which it happened. He contended that all learning was a product of social interactions, not only from the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by an individual, as proposed by Piaget (1970). Vygotsky (1978) viewed knowledge not solely as constructed, but as co-constructed, and posited that language and culture were the frameworks through which individuals experienced, communicated and understood reality. In a social constructivist worldview, there is no absolute knowledge, just our interpretation of it.

Vygotsky's work on sociocultural theory has had a great impact on the fields of psychology, applied linguistics, and especially education. It is impressive that theories formed in the cultural context of the early 1900s are still so relevant and influential to literacy teachers in the 21st century. Vygotsky's proposed tools and notions that are used to mediate learning include: language and social interaction (i.e., peer interaction to generate, explore, and clarify ideas); emotion (i.e., importance of affect on learning); meaningful activity (i.e., personalization

of learning); and the zone of proximal development (i.e., learning supported by scaffolding from a more knowledgeable other) (Smagorinsky, 2013).

Social constructivism frames my research on preservice teachers' developing understanding of how to teach reading. Social constructivism emphasizes that an individual's learning is not an isolated action and cannot be separated from the world in which they live and the environments that they experience. Development happens from the transformation of socially shared activities into internalized processes. Practice, or what we experience, becomes our theories. In other words, preservice teachers' prior experiences and interactions with others have shaped what they presently believe about the teaching of reading. Of high interest and significance within the paradigm of social constructivism, Mezirow's (1996) theory of transformative learning also provides an informative conceptual lens for examining individuals' journeys into the teaching of reading.

Transformative learning theory.

In the current ever-changing world – the liquid modernity – the most pressing psychological challenge to all of us is to create and maintain a personal balance between mental stability and mental flexibility.

Illeris, 2014

Transformative Learning Theory describes the process of how adult learners can gain a greater degree of insight and agency into transforming their beliefs and making them more adaptive to change. Mezirow (b.1923-d.2014), founder of transformative learning theory, was an American sociologist and Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Columbia University, New York. Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformative learning derived from his study on qualitative changes in adults' self-perception and understanding of the outside world. Following the rise of a women's movement in the United States in the 1970s, many women

entered or returned to post-secondary education (including Mezirow's own wife). Deeply influenced by the work of Freire (1970) and the notion of conscientization, Mezirow (1978) conducted a grounded theory field study of 12 diverse re-entry programs in community colleges, in-situ analytical descriptions of 24 additional programs, and responses to a mail survey by another 314. In his study, he intended to identify factors that characteristically impeded or facilitated women's progress in the re-entry programs. The major theoretical finding was the concept of *perspective transformation* in the learning process and personal development of the women participating in the college programs (Mezirow, 2000). He found that by participants becoming critically aware of the cultural, biographical, and historical contexts of their beliefs, they could effect a change in the way they had tacitly structured their assumptions. The change constituted a learned transformation; the resulting process Mezirow (1978) designated as transformative learning.

Similar to Vygotsky, Mezirow (2000) considered that the justification for most of what we know, believe, value, and feel depends on the context – biographical, historical, and cultural – in which we are embedded. As such, there is no fixed truth or definitive knowledge, and circumstances are always changing, resulting in individuals continuously trying to negotiate contested meanings. Mezirow (2000) defined transformative learning as the process by which we “transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they might generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (pp. 7 - 8).

To further clarify his definition of transformative learning, Mezirow (1997) explained *frames of reference* as the structures of assumptions and beliefs resulting from ways of interpreting experience. Those frames of reference may be within or outside of our awareness.

Mezirow (1991) contended that frames of reference were often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialization and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents, and mentors. Those frames of reference reflect our culture and how those responsible for our socialization defined certain situations (e.g., learning to read, attitudes about books, reading, and school). Who we are and what we value are closely associated; consequently, our frames of reference are often emotionally charged and strongly defended. In the same way that frames of reference are a way of validating our experiences, they can also distort our thoughts and perceptions of reality. Mezirow (1991) wrote that over time, in conjunction with numerous congruent experiences, our perspectives become more ingrained in our psyche and we tend to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions; as a result, it is more difficult to change them. Mezirow (2000) posited that we transform frames of reference by becoming critically reflective of our assumptions and aware of their context; the source, nature, and consequences of our taken-for-granted beliefs. When we develop a stance to reflect critically and examine our assumptions and beliefs, we become more open, inclusive, reflective, and willing to change. Becoming aware of the tacit assumptions that have helped us to create personal meaning has the potential to allow us to isolate particular distortions and misrepresentations that inform the baseline of specific knowledge that has not been examined critically (Mezirow, 1991). This perspective on transformation is reflective of the strong influence of the work of Habermas (1984), especially the notion of reflection as a way to emancipate individuals from the constraints of dysfunctional beliefs.

Mezirow (2000) considered that universities provided the ideal milieu for supporting individuals in transformation. He referred to the learning that takes place during childhood as formative, deriving from formal sources of authority and socialization; he (Mezirow, 1991) also

contended that learning has the potential to be transformative in adulthood, because adults (i.e., those old enough to be held responsible for their acts) are more capable of seeing distortions in their own beliefs, feelings, and attitudes. Mezirow (2000) further asserted that in the absence of fixed truths, and when confronted with rapid changes or disorienting dilemmas (i.e., an experience which contradicts previous assumptions), adult learners are more capable than younger learners of realizing that they cannot fully trust what they know and believe. Opinions and interpretations that may have worked for us as children often do not as adults; instead, adult development is oriented towards flexibility in relation to conditions and demands which often change rapidly. This perspective on the potential for transformation is why it is so important that adult learning emphasizes: ‘disorienting’ experiences; contextual understanding; critical dialogue and reflection on assumptions; and validation of meaning by assessing reasons for our assumptions.

Mezirow (2000) understood learning as a “process of using a prior interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action” (p. 5). Such a learning process requires individuals to critically assess how they think and to understand why they think in the way that they do. Learning theory has always made a distinction between two types of learning: learning as addition (i.e., where new knowledge is added/shaped to conform to existing knowledge); and learning as change (i.e., where new knowledge changes existing knowledge) (Illeris, 2014). Vygotsky (1986) proposed that the most significant development typically takes place when the learner goes beyond his or her existing frames or boundaries and enters ‘the zone of proximal development’, a zone which promotes learning as change. Similarly, Mezirow’s (2000) transformative learning theory implies the notion of learning as change, because to transform something is to change or reshape it. In today’s globalized and highly technological society

where rapid change is constant, learning as change has become the crucial process in driving learning development (Jarvis, 2006).

Mezirow spent the majority of his career developing and revising his initial conception of transformative learning theory leading to expansion, and a more thorough explanation of the distinct elements of transformative theory. His work has changed the field of adult education (Hoggan, 2016; Kitchenham, 2008; Newman, 2012). In providing a detailed theoretical foundation for adult learning, Mezirow's transformative learning theory "introduced intellectual rigor into a flagging field" (Newman, 2012, p. 409). Mezirow's thinking has informed the development of other emerging frameworks, such as Transformative Inquiry, a process aimed at increasing preservice teachers' capacity to negotiate the complexities of today's diverse classrooms (Tanaka, 2015). Transformative learning is increasingly being used in studies focussing on exploring change in preservice teachers' worldviews (Arvanitis, 2018; Vatalaro, Szente, & Levin, 2015; Woodrow & Caruana, 2017).

It is appropriate that Mezirow's transformative learning framework is used to situate my research on how preservice teachers develop an understanding of how to teach reading, and how the following three components contribute to that understanding: (1) their biographies; (2) their reflections on participation in a reading processes course; and (3) their reflections on their practicum.

Part I - Evolving Definitions of Literacy

The purpose of Part I is to contextualize the current environment in literacy teaching. I describe evolving definitions of literacy, highlighting their importance and implications for teachers. Since its foundation in 1946, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has kept literacy at the forefront of its efforts to promote the right of

basic literacy education for all. In UNESCO's first report on Fundamental Education (1947), literacy was characterized as a fundamental human right. Scholars disagree on a single definition of literacy; however, their discussions lend understanding to the literacy construct that frames our work as educators. That construct informs us about the mechanisms that influence the definitions of what it means to be literate and how our attempts at a definition reflect our current vision and conceptions of teaching and learning (Scribner, 1984). Literacy definitions also shape our perceptions of learners and affect both the substance and style of instruction (Scribner, 1984). For example, the participants in the current study were all born in the early 1990s, so their learning experiences would have been influenced by the prevalent vision for literacy at the time of their elementary education.

Until the mid-1960s, literacy was considered to be the ability to acquire the basic technical skills of the traditional 3Rs: Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, regardless of the contents and methods for their provision (UNESCO, 2004). From the late 1960s through to the early 1980s, the concept of literacy became associated with socio-economic and political development. Literacy served the 'function' of preparing a workforce able to contribute to the social and economic development of a country. Freire (1970), and his literacy teaching method of conscientization, was very influential in contributing a social and political dimension to the concept of literacy. He advocated the importance of critical literacy and for literacy to be taught in contexts culturally relevant to learners. Critical literacy skills would empower learners to ask questions and give them the skills needed to participate in and take social and political action to improve the conditions of their lives. Freire's work has helped educators worldwide understand the importance of supporting students in developing a critical consciousness in order to perceive and interact with the world on a deeper level. This vision of literacy linked to socio-economic and

political development provided a strong incentive for governments to desire greater control over the education of students (UNESCO, 2004). As a result, the 1980s and 1990s became an era of standardization and accountability, as these were regarded by policy makers as necessary means for schools and teachers to become more efficient in producing a more skilled workforce. Two strong themes of education policy and rhetoric of this time were: (1) an emphasis on the theme of early literacy and the provision of strong, basic, foundational literacy skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic; and (2) an emphasis on the theme of lifelong learning, to motivate students to continue learning beyond school (UNESCO, 2004). Meanwhile, a growing popularity of a sociocultural perspective informed by an extensive research base (Bakhtin, Holquist, & Emerson 1986; Gee, 1990; Lankshear, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978), began to offer a solid alternate perspective. The sociocultural perspective emphasized the role that social practices and contexts had on learning development while challenging the effectiveness of an emphasis on ‘literacy basics’ and ‘functional literacy’ to create more literate citizens. Acknowledging the sociocultural view of the plurality of literacy in relation to varying contexts and individual identities, UNESCO (2004) proposed a revised definition of literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.

Literacy today. Since its inception, the Internet has become an increasingly important dimension to life in the 21st century (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2009) and the sociocultural perspective on learning has greatly continued to influence the discourse on literacy matters. With the rise of the Internet and the unprecedented speed and scale of change in technologies for literacy (Coiro et al., 2009), the creation, acquisition, and dissemination of knowledge is now regarded by governments to be the basis of social and economic development. The Internet permits immediate, global, and continuous reshaping of the forms and functions of

literacy technologies through social practices such as blogs, wikis, video and music dissemination tools, multiplayer online gaming, and social networking platforms. Each reshaping adds new potentials for literacy; making the Internet a major contributor to the continuous redefinition of literacy and making literacy itself more deictic than ever (Forzani & Leu, 2017; Leu, 2000). In this context, a reliance on book and print-based literacies, and teaching approaches based solely on book culture, has become inadequate (Luke, 2000). As a result, the theory of multiliteracies, a term coined by the New London Group (NLG) in 1996, integrates an expanding definition of text to include such modes and tools as e-readers, web pages, audio, video and networking sites (Hartshorne, Heafner & Petty, 2013). The concept of multiliteracies has thus shifted how we define what it means to be literate. Being literate now entails much more than competence with conventional printed text and conventional reading and writing tasks (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013). Multiliteracies conceptualizes students as active learners, designers of their own experiences, and collaborators with peers and teachers as they engage in a wide variety of literacy practices across many contexts, (e.g., using multimedia, multimodal texts in diverse cultural settings) (NLG, 1996).

The position statement of the National Council of Teachers of English (2013), on the definition of 21st century literacies, clearly describes and incorporates the symbiotic relationship between technology and literacy. It states that literacy is:

... a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic and malleable. As in the past, they

are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups. (para. 1)

The foregoing definition highlights the factors that shape the revised concept of literacy's form and function, such as: *multimodality*, which extends the traditional linguistic mode to include the interplay with audio, visual, gestural and spatial modes of communication; a renewed focus on *learner engagement*, through the use of technology, inclusion of learners' literacy practices outside of school, and personalization of learning; *expanded notions of text*, which include classic and popular culture texts in a print and non-print format or a hybrid version of the two; *interactivity*, where technology allows students to create, collaborate, modify, respond to and share content; and, *global reach*, where students can engage with learning outside the classroom walls by using technology to access, collaborate, share their creations and receive feedback worldwide (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

Reforms in education are not new, and, historically literacy's meaning has always changed, evolved and been contested through historical, political, religious, cultural, and technological contexts (Leu, 2000). One of the unique aspects inherent in the current period is the speed at which those changes are taking place (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2017). In British Columbia (BC), the curriculum has been redesigned in order to reflect the range of competencies required for becoming a literate individual in the 21st century. As a result, BC's Ministry of Education (2015) has redefined literacy as "the ability to understand, critically analyze, and create a variety of forms of communication, including oral, written, visual, digital, and multimedia, in order to accomplish one's goals" (Curriculum Redesign, para. 9). This definition also supports the vision for a multiliterate learner.

Implications for teachers. The redefinition of what it means to be literate has

considerable implications for educators (Al-Hazza, 2017; Coiro, 2009; Leu et al., 2017; MacKay, 2014). A new vision for literacy, such as the visions in the definitions articulated by NCTE (2013) and by the BC's Ministry of Education (2015) require the adoption of a multiliteracies pedagogy. Multiliteracies embrace a pedagogy and content that optimally address and reflect the plurality of an increasingly digitized and interconnected world (Anstey & Bull, 2006). Despite the rise of technology over the past three decades, schools have been slow to respond (Cuban, 2001; Forzani & Leu, 2017; Ladbrook, 2009). Some teachers are still struggling to let go of a traditional notion of literacy pedagogy and adopt a pedagogy of multiliteracies. The main areas of tension center on: the expanded definition of text, which includes multimodal and digital forms; the notion of reading as critical social practice; and rapidly changing multimedia technologies (Kist & Pytash, 2015). An expanded definition of text may raise important but uncomfortable tensions among educators, especially those who identify with pencil and paper methods of literacy instruction and privilege established and ratified texts (Barone & Wright, 2008; Mills, 2009). Contrarily, a pedagogy of multiliteracies asks educators to also include in their literacy curriculum students' literacy practices outside of school. These out-of-school literacy practices are likely to include text types such as emails, blogs, text messages, websites, visual literacies and many others, for example, that are still regarded by some educators as inferior literacies (Honan, 2012; Kist & Pytash, 2015). Pedagogy of multiliteracies does not exclude the use of time-honoured 'quality' literature. The pedagogy of multiliteracies is not intended to *replace* the traditional literacy pedagogy, but to *supplement* it, by widening the focus on modes of textual representation much more broadly than on just language and historically ratified texts (NLG, 1996).

Given the essential role of teachers' beliefs in the process of identifying and reframing

past pedagogies (Collie et al., 2012; Muis & Foy, 2010), the next section explores the influences on preservice teachers' beliefs and why it matters to attend to those beliefs during their preparation. I start by clarifying the constructs of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge as understood in the study.

Part II - Preservice Teachers' Beliefs, Attitudes, and Knowledge

The scope of the literature on teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge is very wide (Skott, 2015). Part II will identify the particular definitions adopted for this study and my rationale to support these choices.

The increasing popularity of a socio-constructivist student-centred perspective on learning placed the spotlight on teachers as facilitators of those learning experiences. The whole of teachers' mental lives (Woolfolk-Hoy et al., 2006) was identified as a very significant consideration. In order to understand teachers' teaching practices there was a need to understand the beliefs with which they defined their work (Nespor, 1987). Teachers' thinking, attitudes, values, and beliefs were regarded as either facilitating or impeding educational change and ultimately student learning (Richards, Gipe, & Thompson, 1987). Even though some early researchers compared the concept of attitudes as more of an affective component and beliefs as more of a cognitive component (Fishbein, 1967), there was general agreement that attitudes and beliefs were a group of constructs that influenced a person's actions (Allport, 1967; Richardson, 1996; Rokeach, 1979). Pajares (1992) suggested that attitudes, values, preconceptions, theories, and images were really beliefs in disguise. In relation to teaching, especially, the concepts of teachers' beliefs and their attitudes are often used interchangeably (Borg, 2001). Definitions of teachers' beliefs used in this study are heavily influenced by the work of Pajares (1993), Kagan (1992), and Mezirow (2000). Pajares' work on the construct of self-efficacy beliefs has been

widely cited. He was influenced by Bandura's (b.1925) theoretical construct of self-efficacy and other social cognitive theorists (e.g., William James (1883), *Talk to Teachers...* book).

Acknowledging the challenges in defining beliefs, Pajares (1992) referred to beliefs as a 'messy construct' which "often travels in disguise and often under alias" (p. 309). In an attempt at a definition, Pajares (1993) wrote that preservice teachers' educational beliefs, and non-beliefs in the general broader sense, were "the attitudes and values about teaching, students, and the education process that students bring to teacher education... that can be inferred... not only from what preservice teachers say but from what they do" (p. 46). Beliefs are thus rooted in past experiences; therefore, they are affective and deeply personal. Equally important to understanding PSTs' behaviours was exploring their self-efficacy beliefs (i.e., beliefs they hold about their capabilities). Our self-efficacy beliefs regulate our thinking, motivation, and behaviour (Pajares, 2003), (e.g., the degree to which we feel positively or negatively about our ability to teach literacy, as well as our ability to impact student learning and engagement). Overall, beliefs, including self-efficacy beliefs, often go unchecked and act as filters through which new experiences are interpreted (Pajares, 1992). The notion of beliefs acting as filters is corroborated by Mezirow (1997), who referred to beliefs as frames of reference. These frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand (and attribute coherence and significance to) our experiences. Kagan (1986, 1988, 1990, 1992) has also extensively researched the construct of teachers' beliefs. She referred to teachers' beliefs as a form of "*personal knowledge*". In teacher education research, the terms of belief and knowledge are also subject to some debate and confusion (Richardson, 1996). Within the context of this study, personal knowledge, as interpreted by Kagan (1992), is used to refer to the beliefs, values, and attitudes that preservice teachers bring to their university preparation about the teaching of

reading. This personal knowledge is subjective and contextual and does not require a truth condition (Kagan, 1992). In comparison, “*formal knowledge*” (i.e., agreed-upon truths by a research community – both subject and pedagogical knowledge), (Green, 1971; Lehrer, 1990) is used to refer to knowledge shared during university preparation. Past experiences influence the beliefs, values, attitudes, and knowledge that preservice teachers bring to their teacher education programs (Bryan, 2012; Mohamed, 2014; Pajares, 1992). These past experiences act as filters through which new experiences during their preparation are interpreted (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Simon, 2012). By implication, teacher educators/researchers need to explore the influences on preservice teachers’ beliefs as part of the instruction on how to engage learners in literacy (Levin & He, 2008).

Influences on preservice teachers’ beliefs.

Ignoring the past does not make it go away. It lingers, ever present and quietly insistent.

Bullough & Gitlin, 2001

Three major influencing sources on teacher beliefs have implications for teacher education programs (Kagan, 1992; Levin & He, 2008; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Simon, 2012). They are personal experiences, experiences with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge – both subject and pedagogical knowledge (Borg, 2015; Richardson, 1996).

Personal experiences. Personal experiences shape who we are and our worldview. Interactions with parents, teachers, siblings, friends and significant others, as well as the interplay with a myriad of literacy artifacts and texts used in our literacy development, all have an impact on what we feel and believe. Boggs and Golden (2009) conducted a qualitative content analysis of the literacy histories of 308 PSTs. The results on the influence of personal experiences indicated the critical role that families play in preservice teachers’ attitudes towards

reading. Ninety-two percent of PSTs reported the worth of their mother's modeling and nurturing in their entrance into literacy. Preservice teachers credited their families' provision of literacy experiences in reading and writing at home with their desire to learn to read. These findings corroborate the evidence that parent involvement in their children's reading activities and their beliefs about reading both correlate with, and have causal impact on, reading motivation and achievement (Harris, 2018; Klauda, 2009; Senechal & Young, 2008).

Teachers' attitudes about reading and personal reading behaviours influence instructional practice, student motivation to read, and student reading achievement (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; McKool & Gespass, 2009). Larrañaga and Yubero (2005) argue that values play a key role in identity formation. The values that PSTs hold regarding reading are the values that they pass on to their students. These values support the developing reading identities and habits of their students. Applegate et al. (2014) surveyed 1,025 university students, including 348 PSTs, about their past and current experiences and habits relating to reading. Supporting the strong impact of personal experiences, the results indicated that participants who noted that they received parental encouragement to read, or who were praised by parents for their reading skill were significantly more likely to be classified as *enthusiastic* readers (62.7%) than those who made no note of parental influences. Enthusiastic readers were participants who reported a positive attitude toward reading and had read at least one book during the summer. Among those students who reported that they actually read less at home than they read at school, only 21.3% could be classified as *enthusiastic* readers. Another significant finding from Applegate et al.'s (2014) study (and corroborated by Applegate & Applegate, 2004; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Nathanson, Purslow, & Levitt, 2008; Stocks, Pearce, & Ricard, 2012) was that although PSTs acknowledged the importance of reading,

almost half of them were not enthusiastic readers. The results also indicated a very low level of enthusiasm for reading among PSTs aspiring to teach kindergarten, first grade and special education. Researchers were particularly troubled by this finding, since their analysis of data indicated that initial experiences with reading were found to have profound and long-lasting effects on emerging readers.

The implications from Boggs and Golden's (2009) and Applegate et al.'s (2014) findings are that university educators need to explore PSTs' engagement and attitudes towards reading and provide many opportunities to nurture and address the importance of enthusiasm in teaching and learning to read.

Experience with schooling and instruction. Together with personal experiences, time spent in schools as students also shape who we become and what we believe later as teachers. Our worldview is, in part, informed by the many years spent as a student, watching and participating in classroom interactions (Feiman-Nemser, McDiarmid, Melnick, & Parker, 1989; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Mertz & McNeely, 1991; Wall, 2016). Lortie (1975) referred to this influence as an *apprenticeship of observation*, wherein one's past observations of teachers, in the context of the classroom, influence one's conception of what it means to be a teacher. These observations, unlike Lortie (1975) indicated, are far from passive. Preservice teachers spend roughly 13 years, not just as observers, but as active interpreters of their experiences, attaching emotional significance to what they perceive as 'good' and 'bad' teaching (Sexton, 2004; Smagorinsky, 2013).

Debreli (2016) found that previous learning experiences, both positive and negative, exert a strong influence on preservice teachers' belief formation. The results indicated that PSTs formed beliefs according to the characteristics of the previous teachers they liked/disliked, as

well as the teaching approaches and techniques they previously liked/disliked as students. They used the teachers they liked as role models and did not want to resemble the teachers they disliked. Other studies (Mattheoudakis, 2007; Peacock, 2001; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014) confirm these assertions.

The Boggs and Golden (2009) study also reported that school impact on PSTs' literacy histories was the largest self-reported category (followed by family experiences). School influence included: memories of libraries, teacher relationships, reading aloud, reading for prizes, school events, peer relationships, school programs, individual perceptions regarding ability, technological programs, varied school-related events, handwriting, and spelling. The data further validated the social cultural view that learning is subjective and contextual. As an example, many preservice teachers recalled specific school programs that had an impact on their literacy. These programs could be viewed as positive for one student, negative for another, and even neutral for others (e.g., reading programs for points, reading aloud, spelling). Implications from these findings highlight the importance of supporting PSTs to explore and critically examine the uniqueness of their personal journeys towards literacy (Boggs & Golden, 2009).

Preservice teachers enter their education program with well-developed images of good teachers, images of themselves as teachers, and memories of themselves as students (Kagan, 1992). These images developed through their schooling experience can deeply influence their beliefs about teaching and learning (Anderson et al., 1995; Debreli, 2016; Hollins, 2011; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Lonka, Joram, & Bryson, 1996; Pajares, 1992). These personal beliefs may be incongruent with what teacher educators hope their students will learn (Bryan, 2012; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990), and act as filters for interpreting their teacher education and field placement experiences (Bryan, 2012; Kagan, 1990; Mohamed, 2014; Powell, 1992).

Teacher educators need to create room for preservice teachers' stories to be told. By encouraging PSTs to share their unique experiences with learning literacy, they may reveal their stances on teaching literacy and on "good" or "harmful" ways of supporting individuals' literacy learning. Teacher educators can then facilitate a reflective dialogue that analyzes those memories and beliefs in light of accepted theories and methods that comprise teacher education coursework (Johnson, 2008; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006).

Experience with formal knowledge. The third influence on teachers' beliefs is experience with formal knowledge. Formal knowledge may be experienced through literature, media, and school, including teacher preparation programs.

Preservice education often provides the first step in the professional development of teachers (Chong, Wong, & Lang, 2005). In Canada, the requirements for the qualification of teachers are set by provincial government ministries of education. Even though there are variations among program statements, the common intent of preservice education programmes is to provide prospective teachers with the basic knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to enter teaching (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Van Nuland, 2011). Preparing preservice teachers with a strong knowledge base and skills for teaching forms the basis for quality practice (Haycock, 2000; Sheridan, 2011). The knowledge base includes subject knowledge (i.e., literacy, mathematics, social studies, etc.) and pedagogical knowledge (i.e., content, skills, strategies required for effective teaching) (Gerges, 2001; Wilke, 2004). Pedagogical knowledge is more closely linked to teacher belief than subject knowledge (Chong et al., 2005). There are many factors, such as prior experiences in school, that influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the adoption and implementation of a variety of instructional strategies and models. McGlynn-Stewart's (2016) study explored the perspectives of six elementary teachers, in their first year of

teaching, with respect to the influence of their personal learning history on their professional literacy learning and teaching. McGlynn-Stewart found that those students who had struggled with literacy learning as students continued to struggle with university-based preservice courses and felt that the program had not met their needs. On the other hand, those students who had successful literacy experiences as students found the university courses interesting and enjoyable, albeit less practical than they would have liked. All participants found the practicum placements more helpful than coursework in preparing them to teach literacy. Another interesting aspect of the data was that only participants who had had successful literacy experiences as students were able to use their childhood experiences to supplement what they learned in practicum. The results indicated the strong impact of prior experiences with literacy learning on PSTs' expectations, attitudes towards, and perceived effectiveness of, a literacy methods course. The implications suggest the need for preservice programs to be more flexible, adaptable, and differentiate teaching to better meet the needs of PSTs the way that we strive to for school children (McGlynn-Stewart, 2016).

A significant challenge for university educators is to make preservice teachers' entering beliefs more open to develop new and more congruent understandings with current literacy research. Preservice teachers' beliefs are often formed as a result of early experiences with family, former teachers, and various school experiences prior to coming into Teacher Education programs (Fisher, Fox, & Paille, 1996). These beliefs tend to be long-standing (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), stable, deeply entrenched, and resistant or difficult to change (Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Mertz & McNeely, 1991). This resistance to new knowledge is especially problematic when it manifests in the interaction with content preservice teachers encounter in their teacher education courses (Massey, 2001). Massey (2001) conducted a study to explore the

impact of her teaching on students' developing understanding of literacy teaching. She found that students tended to resist information that contradicted their prior knowledge and experiences, and instead seemed more willing to assimilate knowledge that was consistent with what they already believed. This resistance was more evident in topics the students felt they knew more about. Massey collected data throughout a semester on 23 out of 35 students in the class who agreed to participate in the study. She used five data sources. Two sources (i.e., researcher journal and lesson plans) informed her about changes in her own teaching and understanding; the other three sources (i.e., student journals, class assignments, and class discussion & field notes) informed her of the students' use of course content to design literacy instruction. Massey indicated the need for university educators to confront preservice teachers' existing knowledge, helping the students to bring it to a conscious level.

In addition to coursework, all teacher education programmes also require some form of teaching experience in a school setting (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Falkenberg, 2010; Van Nuland, 2011). This immersion in daily teaching and learning processes in schools (with the supports of a mentor teacher and faculty supervisor), intends to allow prospective teachers the opportunity to observe and practice teaching in an authentic setting. During their field experiences, preservice teachers are encouraged to relate classroom work with university coursework and apply theoretical and experiential knowledge to facilitate learning opportunities for students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2017). Through reflection on their teaching together with formative feedback from the mentor teacher and faculty supervisor, PSTs can construct understanding of themselves as teachers, teaching, and other professional issues of schools (Van Nuland, 2011). Teacher educators conceptualize their courses to include many connections to the field, linking theory to practice. By planning for this connection between

theory and practice, educators' goals include making theories of literacy and learning explicit; supporting preservice teachers in developing their own theories of practice and teaching skills; and, nurturing the development of an inquiry stance that will not be quickly undone by the realities of teaching (Kosnik, Rowsell, Williamson, Simon, & Beck, 2013). Tilson, Sandretto and Pratt (2017) conducted a study to explore how to support PSTs to make meaningful connections between theory and practice. The findings indicated that providing opportunities for participants to discuss dissonance between their personal and formal theories and actual practice (i.e., through video recordings of their teaching) prompted a cycle of praxis leading all participants to change their practice in productive ways for themselves and their students. Dissonance acted as a trigger that supported participants to find greater congruence between personal beliefs, theories, and practice. This study is very important in showing that it is possible to change PSTs personal theories rendering them more receptive to formal theories shared through coursework. The data points to the need for teacher educators to: create multiple spaces in which PSTs can affirm and resist theory; and, support PSTs to critically consider the usefulness of theory in terms of their context (Luke, 2000; Massey, 2001; Risko et al., 2008; Tilson et al., 2017).

The significance of preservice teachers' beliefs.

Preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes matter because they have tremendous impact on their practice (Abbitt, 2011; Chai, Teo, & Lee, 2009; Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009; Kajander, 2007; Ma, Lai, Williams, & Prejean, 2008). The educational beliefs held by PSTs influence their attitudes and orientations towards teaching reading and writing, perceptions of readers and writers, understandings of texts, and, perception of their role in supporting students' literacy development (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Vacca et al., 2015). Preservice teachers' beliefs are likely influenced by prolonged exposure to the work of teachers. During their many

years as students, PSTs internalized many of the values, beliefs, and practices of their teachers and began to develop their own theories about good and bad teaching practice without the influence of formal instruction (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). These preconceptions of teaching are sometimes underdeveloped, and in some cases, counterproductive, misleading, antiquated, or ineffective (Bryan, 2003; Leavy, McSorley, & Boté, 2007; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Wall, 2016). Those beliefs serve as filters through which preservice teachers view and interpret new knowledge during their preparation (Bryan, 2003; Levin & He, 2008; Mohamed, 2014; Richardson, 2003; Wall, 2016). Through their filters, PSTs actively judge the potential efficacy of ideas, theories, and strategies of instruction on the grounds of personal experience and practicality (Britzman, 2003; Levin & He, 2008; Richardson, 2003; Wall, 2016); and, although ideas or strategies shared in coursework may seem appropriate, preservice teachers may not be eager to confront discrepancies or consider alternative forms of practice (Bryan, 2003; Kist & Pytash, 2015).

Alternatively, preservice teachers tend to be strongly influenced by teachers, experiences, or course content that legitimate their existing belief structures – feeling that ‘what constituted good teaching then constitutes it now’ (Kist & Pytash, 2015; Lortie, 1975; Wall, 2016). This dynamic of acceptance/rejection of information seems to indicate that a student’s personal beliefs and images determine how their preparation is interpreted and how much knowledge the student acquires from a preservice program (Kagan, 1992). Therefore, existing beliefs can form barriers to understanding and to implementing more innovative, student-centered, knowledge-construction theories (Britzman, 2003; Bryan, 2003; Furlong & Maynard, 1995).

Teachers are a critical factor in K-12 students’ literacy performance (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018; Demie, 2012; Grisham, 2000; Hattie, 2009). The quality of teachers’ instruction

has the greatest effect on students' literacy achievement outcomes and is critical to students' development of essential literacy skills (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Moats, 2014; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). Nye et al. (2004) used data from a four-year experiment in which teachers and students were randomly assigned to classes to estimate a teacher's impact on students' achievement. Results showed substantial differences among teachers in the ability to produce achievement gains in their students. Teacher effects on student learning were larger than school effects; and, teacher effects were much larger in students of low socio-economic status. The experiment involved 79 elementary schools. Kindergarten students were randomly assigned to three treatment condition classes: small classes (13-17 students), larger classes (22-26 students), or larger classes with a full-time aide. These assignments were maintained and studied from Kindergarten to grade 3. Teachers at each subsequent grade level were randomly assigned to classes as the experimental cohort passed through their grade. Researchers concluded that any systematic variance in achievement between classrooms that had the same treatment must have been due to variations in teacher effectiveness. Class sizes within treatment groups and teacher education could not explain teacher effects. Nye et al. (2004) proposed further research to identify teacher characteristics that could be used to predict which teachers are more effective. These conclusions are strengthened by the secondary literature. For example, Hattie (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of evidence-based research on quality teaching, drawn from an extensive synthesis of over half a million studies, and asserted that the greatest source of variance to make a difference on student learning was the teacher.

In the teaching of reading, it is very important for educators to support preservice teachers' exploration of their orientations towards the teaching of reading. Their awareness of their orientations exists along a continuum, ranging from completely unaware to consciously

aware. When teacher candidates are aware of their theories, or belief systems, they are able to label them, talk about them with others, and compare their own theories with alternative ones (Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

Orientations towards reading instruction. Harste and Burke (1977) define a theoretical orientation in reading instruction as the particular knowledge and belief system held toward reading; that is, those deep philosophical principles that guide teachers to establish expectations about student behaviour and the host of decisions they must make as they plan and teach reading lessons. Research indicates that prior experiences as students observing teachers can be a significant influence on preservice teachers' orientations towards teaching (Joram & Gabriele, 1998). As indicated by DeFord (1985), the four dominating models and theoretical perspectives that have influenced learning to read are: bottom-up, top-down, interactive, and social constructivist models.

Bottom-up perspective. This perspective was a major trend in reading instruction in the 1960s and 1970s. It is part of a traditional approach to reading in which meaning is viewed as residing in the text and readers are passive recipients of information from the text; reading is the activity of extracting and reproducing meaning from the text (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991). Learning to read is considered a linear, hierarchical process proceeding from the parts to the whole (i.e., starting with the recognition of key features in letters, their sounds, and continuing letter by letter, then word by word, then sentence by sentence) (Gough, 1972; Lipson & Wixson, 2003). Learning the alphabetical principle, is a necessary first step before readers can be successful in comprehending what they are reading (Bloomfield, 1942; Dechant, 1993; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

Teachers who believe in the bottom-up perspective of how students learn to read plan

lessons to ensure that students have a strong foundation in phonics by learning the letter names and sounds first, progressing to whole words and memorizing a list of sight words before students can read increasingly more complex sentences, paragraphs, and a whole text. Drills and practice are important instructional strategies to help with mastery. Phonics and decoding skills precede lessons on comprehension, which entails extracting the meaning from the text. Teachers assess students' comprehension by means of questions for which there is only one right answer. Some of the materials and activities used are basal readers with controlled, and increasingly more difficult passages, flashcards with letters, sounds and sight words, phonics games and workbooks, grammar and vocabulary exercises. A major drawback of the bottom-up model, according to Eskey (1973), is how it underestimates the contribution of the reader to the reading situation. Unlike a top-down perspective of reading, the bottom-up model fails to recognize that students use their experiences, their expectations about the text, their knowledge of language and how it works to help with decoding and comprehension of what they read.

Top-down perspectives. Especially popular during the 1970s, and in opposition to the bottom-up view of reading, the top-down model offers a cognitive view of the reading process in which reading is regarded as a language-thinking process and not just a sequential mastering of letters to words. The top-down model posits that meaning resides in the reader and promotes an approach to reading that proceeds from the whole to the parts, from the text to the words and letters. In this context, Goodman (1967) referred to reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game in which readers use their knowledge about language and the world to help them sample the text, make hypotheses about meaning, test them against the print, confirm or reject them, and make new hypotheses. The more readers know in advance about the topic, the less they need to rely on the text's graphic information.

Teachers who identify with a top-down perspective of how students learn to read plan lessons to support students in activating their prior knowledge to facilitate the reading process. They use instructional strategies such as vocabulary exercises, visual representations, semantic mapping, making predictions, finding contextual cues by skimming and scanning the text by looking at images, headings and sub-headings, and they encourage students to select books based on their personal interests. A top-down approach's diminished role of the phonics element in the reading process and the over-reliance on the reader's experience and prior knowledge to comprehend the text, although very important elements to consider in the reading process, also prove to be insufficient in supporting all students to become effective readers. It marginalizes all those students who do not have rich experiences and prior knowledge to draw from as an aid in the reading process (Bainbridge, Hayden, & Malicky, 2008). By the late 1970s, many educators were questioning the adequacy of both the bottom-up and the top-down perspectives. A new perspective emerged - the interactive model, which espoused the perceived benefits of both models (Eskey, 1988; Samuels & Kamil, 1988) and incorporated elements from other models emerging at the time.

Interactive perspectives. For Rumelhart (1977), reading was both a perceptual and cognitive process. It required both prior knowledge and grapho-phonemic information to process and interpret texts interactively. Fluent readers are both effective decoders and effective interpreters of text (Eskey, 1988). A skilled reader must be able to make use of cueing systems - the sensory, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information to process and interpret text (Rumelhart, 1985). This view of reading helps to account for differences in processing of information depending on students' particular strengths (Bainbridge et al., 2008). Stanovich (1980) introduced the idea of 'compensatory mode' which argued that the reader could

compensate for deficits in an area with strengths from another area, influencing research in theorizing about how good readers and poor readers approach a text. Anderson and Pearson (1984) emphasized the crucial role that activating the students' schema played in promoting comprehension. Mathewson (1994) added the important role that attitude and motivation played in reading and how important it is to address affective issues when teaching reading.

Teachers who believe and understand the reasoning and evidence behind the interactive perspective in reading are particularly mindful of planning lessons that motivate students to want to learn by including topics, activities, and resources that are of interest to them. They know that activating background knowledge helps with reading and will design before, during, and after reading activities to engage students' knowledge and experiences and help them connect these to the text. Instructional strategies, such as graphic organizers and discussions, are used for this purpose. Aware of the importance of effective decoding on reading, teachers with an interactive perspective also devote classroom instruction to developing reading readiness skills such as phonemic awareness, concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and others.

Even though an interactive view of reading is a great improvement to the more radical approaches to reading espoused by both bottom-up and top-down perspectives, it still fails to take into consideration the social nature of reading and learning to read.

Social constructive perspectives. Vygotsky (1986) suggested that individuals learn with meaning and personal significance in mind, not just through attention to the facts; therefore, learning was optimized when learners were engaged in meaningful tasks. Through the concept of the zone of proximal development, he indicated that providing careful supports in tasks that students cannot yet perform independently, more competent peers, or a teacher, can further students' cognitive development. Social constructive and interactive perspectives differed in how

they viewed the interaction between the reader and the text. An interactive perspective still sees meaning as mostly residing within the text and the reader as receiver of that meaning (Straw, 1990). In contrast, a social constructive view perceives reading as a process that involves the active construction of meaning from a text. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory explained this active construction of meaning happened in the transaction between the text, the reader's knowledge and social background, and the social context of the reading act, both within and outside the school context. Meaning is then subjective; however, this is not to suggest that all meanings are accurate; instead, we are encouraged to pay close attention to every detail of the text and to our responses, and to discuss our interpretations with others. Rosenblatt (1978) stated that the way we approach a transaction with a text depends on the purpose. In efferent reading, we are reading to get the gist or information we need; in aesthetic reading, we are reading for pleasure, seeking to enjoy a text's formal characteristics such as its rhythms, word choices, images, and connotations.

Teachers who understand and believe in a social constructivist perspective on how students learn to read take care to create more student-centred and flexible environments that allow for collaboration and group work. They offer many opportunities for students to talk about books and encourage the validity of multiple interpretations. Teachers guide students in establishing purposes for reading, and instructional focus is on constructing meaning, rather than reading every word correctly. Readers are supported and encouraged to draw on knowledge of the cueing systems – semantic, syntactic, grapho-phonetic, and pragmatic - to make sense of text (Bainbridge et al., 2008). Teachers take into consideration the variety of learners in a class by planning instruction tailored to their needs. Teachers use reading inventories to get to know their students' reading interests and organize classroom libraries that reflect those interests. Aware of

the importance of providing just the right amount of challenge to scaffold students' learning, the teacher selects texts carefully, so they match students reading abilities. Teachers tailor scaffolding and differentiate their instruction to students' needs through guided reading. There is less of a focus on summative tasks because they believe that optimal learning happens during targeted instruction within the students' zone of proximal development. Instead, teachers emphasize diagnostic assessments to get to know their students and their needs and use on-going formative assessments to adjust instruction. Realizing the importance of students' thinking to their cognitive development, teachers encourage the use of reading strategies to monitor comprehension, metacognition, and reflection. Believing in the crucial role of language in how students learn, organize their thoughts, and communicate their learning to others, teachers allow many opportunities for oral language activities, group brainstorming, and peer feedback. In this student-centred approach, learner engagement is paramount and their interests and passions are considered when planning learning opportunities. Careful consideration is given to the application of learning to authentic tasks, close to the students' real-life experiences. In *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice* (2010), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicated that a socio-constructivist orientation to teaching is congruent with the characteristics of learning in the 21st century.

Beliefs are an especially important construct at a time of significant paradigm shifts in education, such as the current technological era. When teacher beliefs are not aligned with philosophical principles guiding reform (Bryan, 2012) implementing up-to-date learning-centered professional practice cannot occur. A main goal of preparation programs is to change preservice teachers' beliefs to align with current best practices so as to continuously support student learning (Skott, 2015). By understanding the roots underlying their theoretical

orientations towards the teaching of reading, preservice teachers might be more open to revise antiquated and ineffectual teaching practices in order to adopt those which are congruent with core principles for learning environments in the 21st century. According to Mezirow (2000), as the institutions responsible for the preparation of teachers, universities offer an ideal milieu to support teachers in critically examining their assumptions about the teaching of reading. To further situate my study, I next examine the literature on the impact of teacher preparation programs on changing preservice beliefs about the teaching of reading.

Part III - Influence of University Coursework and Field Experiences on Preservice

Teachers' Beliefs

Preservice teachers consider some courses in teacher education as inconsequential or insignificant, such as foundational courses and methods courses (Collins, Selinger, & Pratt, 2003; Massey, 2001; Naylor, Campbell-Evans, & Maloney, 2015). During Massey's (2001) explorations of the ways in which her literacy methods course affected her preservice students, she wrote that they often stated they thought methods courses were a waste of time. Book, Byers and Freeman (1983) administered a survey to 473 education students regarding their university experiences. When addressing expectations of program preparation, students identified on-the-job training and supervised teaching experiences to have been the most valuable sources of their professional knowledge. The perceived value of these two sources outdistanced all others on the survey list, including preparation in their major field of study and courses in instructional methods. Preservice teachers tend to want, and expect to receive, from university preparation, practical skills and information (like recipes) for immediate classroom application (Anderson, 2012; Britzman, 2003). As an example, a dominant area of concern for preservice teachers is classroom management. As long-time students, they are very familiar with the role of teacher as

a social controller. They want a set of steps on how to address behaviour management (Britzman, 2003). The need for a set of directions on how to teach often precludes the desire for theory. Some preservice teachers believe most of their knowledge about teaching will come from practice in the field or through trial and error when they enter the classroom. This belief leads to a diminished interest in what they perceive to be theory, and increased interest in practical approaches (Collins et al., 2003; Massey, 2001; Naylor et al., 2015; Whitbeck, 2000; Wilke, 2004). Naylor et al. (2015) sought to identify the factors influencing learning to teach. An important finding was the recommendation from preservice teachers for increased practicum time with a university component attached to the practicum (an embedded model) to strengthen the link between theory and practice. Researchers interviewed seven preservice teachers in the last semester of their four-year Bachelor of Education program, probing for significant or insignificant learning experiences during their preparation. Valuing practical experiences may signify that preservice teachers are not as receptive to the knowledge, perspectives, and best practices that teacher educators thoughtfully prepare and present in their university courses (Chong et al., 2005).

Some argue that despite exemplary teaching and literacy practices, university coursework and field experiences have minimal impact on transforming preservice teachers' previously held beliefs and attitudes (Ajayi, 2010; Alger, 2009). Instead, new teachers tend to revert to incorporating strategies experienced during their own schooling into their teaching practice (Barnyack & Paquette, 2010; Kist & Pytash, 2015; Wall, 2016).

Barnyack and Paquette (2010) found no statistical impact of a reading methods course on participants' beliefs about reading. The authors aimed to identify and compare preservice teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading at the beginning and upon completion of a reading

methods course to measure if coursework had affected those beliefs. The authors administered the *Elementary Education Students' Instructional Beliefs Survey* to 66 preservice teachers (aged 18 to 26) enrolled in a reading methods class. Participants completed the survey online before and after completion of the reading methods course. The survey explored their beliefs on teaching beginning reading, the kinds of materials teachers and students should use, teaching comprehension, importance of teaching reading skills, and how to incorporate the students' need for meaningful learning into instruction. The items reflected four theoretical orientations: whole language, literature-based, skills, and phonics. The results indicated that overall, participants' beliefs were generally literature-based, but beliefs about phonics and skill instruction were also strong. These orientations remained mostly consistent at the end of the course. Barnyack and Paquette (2010) acknowledged the need for further research in this area to include more qualitative measures, such as interviews, in order to gain a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the process that preservice teachers' reading instructional beliefs undergo while enrolled in a reading methods course.

Calderhead and Robson (1991) found that after a year of coursework, preservice teachers appeared to have been unable to change their original impressions of teachers and teaching. Participants were interviewed periodically throughout the year about their anxieties, images of self as teacher, and understanding of how students learn. They viewed videos modelling different styles of teaching a math lesson and a writing lesson and were asked to describe aspects of the lessons that they liked/disliked and how they might teach similar material. At the end of the year, they were asked to imagine teaching the class and to create a script of the dialogue between themselves and their students. Data indicated that each of the 12 preservice teachers entered the program with clear images of "good" teaching that were related to their own classroom

experiences as students. These images appeared to be derived from one or two role models and were inflexible across classroom contexts. The findings indicated that preservice teachers appeared to have been unable to adapt their images of teachers and lessons to different situations and student needs.

McDaniel (1991) examined how 22 preservice teachers (3 elementary, 19 secondary) made sense of a foundations course on the philosophy and history of education. Neither the content of the course nor the field observations affected their prior beliefs. Each participant was interviewed six times and asked to relate class sessions to field observations. The findings indicated that they tended to relate the content of the course to their own beliefs and prior experiences in classrooms.

Weinstein (1990) examined changes in students' beliefs about teaching and found that, despite the coursework and field experiences, the candidates' beliefs about teaching and themselves as teachers remained unchanged throughout the semester. His study included 38 prospective elementary teachers who were enrolled in an introductory education course that included a 21-hour field experience. The participants completed questionnaires and a subset of 12 students was then interviewed periodically throughout the semester. The questionnaire and the interviews probed the candidates' preconceptions about the definition of good teaching, their expectations for student teaching, and their perceptions of their own strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Data suggested that the candidates were extremely optimistic about their future teaching assignments and that their conceptions of good teaching centered on affective traits (e.g., the capacity to care for children).

Also significant are findings from Kagan's (1992) comprehensive review of 40 studies focussed on teacher beliefs. The review indicated that despite differences in focus, studies on

teachers' beliefs have yielded consistent findings in two areas: beliefs appear to be relatively stable and resistant to change, and they tend to be associated with orientation toward the teaching of reading. Her comprehensive literature review analyzed 40 studies published/presented between 1987 and 1991. Kagan (1992) posited that: changes in belief were not generally affected by reading and applying findings from educational research; preservice teachers were more influenced by their cooperating teachers than by university courses; and that when starting their teaching careers, teachers continued to solve instructional problems by relying on their own beliefs and experiences. Kagan's (1992) review also corroborated the evidence that preservice teachers tended to leave their university preparation programs with the same beliefs they brought to them, and, rather than altering their biases, they appeared to grow increasingly comfortable with them.

Following more contemporary student-centred views on teaching and learning in teacher preparation, there has been an increase in research aimed at gauging the effectiveness of undergraduate reading courses in fostering adaptive beliefs (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Brenna & Dunk, 2018; Dillon, O'Brien, Sato, & Kelly, 2011). A few studies have revised prior inventories to reflect contemporary trends in reading orientations and curricula (Knudson & Anderson, 2000) and employ a variety of student-centred methodological approaches (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; Linek, Sampson, Raine, Klakamp & Smith, 2006). As a result, and despite the significant research evidence on the minimal impact of university preparation in changing preservice teachers' initial beliefs, there is also an increasing number of studies that report findings that are encouraging for teacher educators.

Asselin (2000) explored the impact of the reader-response component in her reading methods course on her 39 students' beliefs about reading and literature. The results indicated that

instructional activities in teacher education programs can assist preservice teachers in identifying and changing their beliefs. She used a reader response journal method to engage students in reflecting on their participation in classroom activities. The instructor/researcher started the reader-response component by doing a whole class introduction in which students experienced and discussed reader-response instruction. The instructor modelled all the steps and de-briefed discussions on how to use readers' responses as data for evaluating comprehension. After, the students selected one novel from the 12 provided. In groups of four they read, discussed (in a literature circle format) and planned a unit of study. Throughout the process, students kept a reading response/log which they shared and discussed as a group during their meetings. A reading response format was modelled by the instructor. At the end of the reader-response component participants wrote a reflection centred on what students had learned about themselves as readers, the reading process, reading-writing relationships, literature and assessment. Even though the researcher did not use a pre- and post- design, students' reflective writing showed an influence of the course content on their beliefs. New understandings were evident, many used expressions such as, "Before, I used to think..." and all of them used terminology that was specific to the component, and which was unlikely to have been familiar to them before the course began. Shaw et al. (2007) also corroborated that teacher education can be effective in changing students' views. The study aimed to identify the literacy knowledge, beliefs and self-efficacy of 52 preservice teachers prior to, and at the end of, a reading methods course. The authors were the instructors. Leland (2013) also found that participants' beliefs about teaching young readers were affected by coursework and field experience. They collected narrative responses from 106 preservice teachers reflecting on the prompt, "As you reflect on the information shared in the course what has made a significant impact on your perception of

emergent literacy?” Brenna and Dunk (2018) used their language arts course as a context to capture their PSTs’ evolving understanding about the process of becoming reading teachers. Through the use of pre and post semi-structured surveys and mid-course exit cards, the instructors probed PSTs’ definitions of early reading and understandings of how it should be taught. Additionally, researchers asked participants to reflect on the experiences that influenced their beliefs, as well as experiences during the course that contributed to their changing understanding. Results indicated a positive influence of the course in supporting PSTs’ movement from their past frameworks of reading based on early experiences as children to include understandings promoted in the language arts course. Contrary to other findings that posit that PSTs privilege practicum placement (Anderson, 2012; Britzman, 2003; Massey 2001), participants in this study rated lecture and discussion in class as the main catalyst to their change in understanding. The authors argue for the importance of promoting reflexive thinking through planning for ongoing opportunities for PSTs to reflect critically on their assumptions and the nature of those assumptions.

Clark et al. (2013) also argued that teacher preparation programs have a positive influence on the perceptions, abilities and understandings of beginning teachers. They tracked 41 elementary preservice teachers’ perceived ability to teach reading as they moved through their teaching program into their first full-time teaching job. Through quantitative and qualitative data (including observations and interviews during their first year of teaching) they found that all participants increased in their perceived teaching ability and demonstrated ability to implement strategies shared during their preparation.

Wildman and Niles (1987) found that it was possible to alter preservice teachers’ beliefs and support them in acquiring new understandings by providing them with opportunities to

undergo a state of ‘disequilibrium’. Smith, Sampson, Linek and Raine (2001) found that field experiences during teacher preparation offered more opportunities for conceptual change through more contact with a variety of dissonance factors. Those factors seemed to have a strong impact on preservice teachers’ beliefs regarding literacy education. Linek et al.’s (2006) study aimed to understand the development of the literacy beliefs and change processes in preservice teachers with reading specializations and ascertain factors influencing those processes. Their findings revealed that dissonance provided by field experiences against their previously held beliefs provided the ‘trigger’ for the critical examination of those beliefs. These researchers followed eight preservice teachers through their field experiences during their final year of university. Researchers collected data from: a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire, Philosophical Orientation to Literacy Learning (Smith et al., 2001), administered before, during, and at the end of the field placement; participants’ lesson plans; and written reflections from their teaching experiences. Some of those experiences of dissonance occurred primarily while implementing instruction, especially dissonance between the preparation of lessons and their actual effectiveness in promoting student learning; another experience for dissonance occurred when preservice teachers experienced success applying a new idea learned during coursework. Linek et al. (2006) wrote that it was the reflection on these actual teaching experiences that provided the “anchor” for the shifts in beliefs.

Masuda and Ebersole (2013) conducted a two-year study focussed on preservice teachers’ evolving understanding and views of literacy during their preparation. The findings showed the strong impact of coursework and field experience on participants’ beliefs. Two cohorts of students (elementary and secondary) participated in the study; 30 participants in the first year and 40 in the second year. Researchers examined students’ literacy logs and three

literacy reflections, to capture the actual language used by participants to interpret their conceptions of literacy throughout the course as well as a lesson plan, which indicated how participants' views were reflected in their pedagogy. Through the students' reflections, researchers noticed a move from initial traditional notions of literacy to embracing instructional practices more supportive of 21st century skills. Masuda and Ebersole (2013) argued for the importance for teacher educators to support preservice teachers with opportunities to explore their beliefs about literacy and opportunities to engage as reflective practitioners.

More recently, Sheridan (2016) posited that not only does university preparation have a strong impact on PSTs, but also that there are additional educational opportunities when preservice teachers are more receptive to building new teaching practices. Her study aimed at exploring change in pedagogical beliefs throughout a four-year program, using a survey method administered to 167 students at the beginning and end of each year of their preparation. The findings were significant in showing that to effect change, teacher educators need an understanding of the initial beliefs of PSTs and of the optimum time to introduce new beliefs or challenge existing beliefs (found to be in Years 2 and 3 of the degree). Another finding was that courses catering to the needs of diverse students were better placed in Year 4 when PSTs had gained more confidence with their pedagogical practices.

All of these research studies on the positive impact of coursework on teachers' beliefs shared several traits. Firstly, many were conducted during a methods class; secondly, the researcher was the instructor for the class; thirdly, the instructor purposely implemented instructional conditions designed to change or broaden prospective teachers' beliefs about reading (Risko et al., 2008); and lastly, the instructor demonstrated and shared the learning activities with guided practice in the application of specific course content. They strongly

suggest that it is possible to affect preservice teachers' existing beliefs during a methods course if the instructor is intentional in planning learning situations purposely to target and facilitate change in students' beliefs.

Literature on conceptual change indicates that personal beliefs tend to act both as filters and foundation of new knowledge (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982). Kagan (1992) refers to the research of Posner et al. (1982) indicating that to promote conceptual change, teachers must support students in making explicit their pre-existing personal beliefs, challenging the adequacy of those beliefs, and be given many opportunities to examine, elaborate, and integrate new information into their belief systems. By challenging personal beliefs, we support students in transcending their personal experiences. By uncovering and interrogating the initial beliefs of teacher candidates, one can understand the source and nature of possible areas of resistance (Levin & He, 2008). Preservice students also need time to make new knowledge their own, and to transform and incorporate it into their highly personal pedagogies (Massey, 2001; Pop, 2015). In a manner similar to what I do in my classes, some university courses emphasize the use of self-reflection as a strategy to support preservice teachers to expose and confront their well-developed beliefs (Kagan, 1992). Other programs use case studies to promote critical restructuring of personal beliefs (Park & Ertmer, 2007). Regardless of the variation in findings, all research to date on preservice teachers' beliefs recognizes the influence that prior beliefs have on their perspectives on teaching, and that without careful planning to 'deal' directly with those beliefs, they have the potential to remain largely unaffected by university coursework alone.

The present study is informed by Mezirow's (1991) position that universities provide the ideal milieu to support preservice teachers in critically reflecting on and revising previously held beliefs so that they can move towards new understandings. This milieu includes a combination of

methods courses and field placements (practica), a combination that favours conditions for deeper learning and changes in beliefs (Risko et al., 2008). Britzman (2003) reminded us of the importance of investigating the theories that prospective teachers grasp and retain to guide their thinking (Hoffman et al., 2005; Pomerantz & Pierce, 2010; Risko et al., 2008), and how important it is to understand how and why they hold on to some theories while dismissing others. Barnyak and Paquette (2010) suggested that to further understand how preservice teachers developed their understanding of teaching reading, qualitative research methods, such as interviews, should be favoured. This body of research supports the need for my study, as it has the potential to garner an in-depth understanding of the influences on preservice teachers' beliefs, and their interplay during a reading processes course and practicum.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a description of the theoretical concepts that frame the present study: social constructivism and transformative learning theory. The second section of the chapter was divided into three main parts addressing the review of the literature pertaining to the most relevant concepts that inform this research. Part I examined the evolving definition of what it means to be literate and what it means for teaching reading in the 21st century, followed by a brief discussion of some of the challenges this context presents to teachers. Part II was based on research evidence that teachers' beliefs influence their instructional choices. I started by examining the literature on the meaning and understandings of preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge. Next, I explored the influences on the beliefs that prospective teachers bring to their preparation program, and concluded the section by reviewing the literature on why attending to those beliefs is essential. Lastly, in Part III, I investigated the literature on how

university preparation, namely coursework and field experiences, influenced preservice teachers' beliefs.

The next chapter provides an understanding of my orientation to research, including my assumptions and the participants' backgrounds, as well as the context and methodology I employed to explore the research question.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this qualitative, multiple case study. The central question guiding my research was: What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?

My primary intent was to unearth a rich and textured understanding of how preservice teachers interpreted their experiences and developed their understanding of how to teach reading, through participation in a reading processes course and practicum. My interest in looking closely at preservice teachers' initial beliefs and attitudes, and how they developed, led me to adopt a qualitative inquiry. A qualitative researcher seeks to understand the meanings people construct about their world and their experiences within that world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This chapter outlines: (1) the qualitative paradigm and how it aligns with my worldview; (2) a rationale for the appropriateness of using a qualitative case study as my methodology; and (3) an in-depth description of the research design used in the present study, including an overview of the various types of data collected and step-by-step procedures involved in data collection.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It allows for rich and vivid descriptions of the participants' personal experiences of a phenomena in their natural setting, is useful in describing complex phenomena in depth, and permits researchers to express an insider's viewpoint (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified four characteristics of the nature of qualitative research: (1) the focus is on understanding and meaning; (2) the researcher is the primary

instrument of data collection and analysis; (3) the process is inductive; and (4) the product is richly descriptive.

Focus on understanding and meaning. The overall purposes of qualitative research are to reach an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, outline the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience. A key concern is to understand the process of meaning-making from an emic perspective (i.e., participants) and not from an etic perspective (i.e., researcher) (Richards & Morse, 2013).

Researcher as primary instrument. Since the main goal of qualitative research is on understanding, the researcher functions as an “instrument” capable of adapting and responding to the data while it is being collected (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, during and after the process of data collection, the researcher is also able to deepen understanding based on verbal and non-verbal cues from participants, clarify and summarize material, explore unanticipated responses, and check with participants on the accuracy of interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The position of the researcher as a primary instrument presents important challenges to the interpretation of the data, especially biases, which require careful consideration. Within the qualitative paradigm, it is essential that the researcher makes explicit the personal assumptions that support the lens through which the research is conducted. Besides identifying and communicating personal assumptions, the qualitative researcher also needs to carefully monitor those assumptions against the theoretical framework that informs the study and how those interests may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

An inductive process. In qualitative research, rather than focusing on testing a hypothesis (deductive process), the researcher gathers emerging data and builds understandings, usually in the form of themes, concepts, categories, and other related factors. The theoretical

underpinnings initially chosen for the study are informed by the emerging data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Rich description. Qualitative researchers place a high priority on direct interpretation of events and a lower priority, if any, on the interpretation of measured data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Rather than using numbers to quantify data, the end product of qualitative research contains rich descriptions of the context, activities, and participants. Data in the form of quotes from interviews and reflections from participants, for example, are included in the study to support the findings and contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to ‘control’ and ‘explain’ through a focus on causes and effects, qualitative research seeks to uncover and understand the complex interrelationships between all that exists (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research emphasizes naturalistic interpretations and embraces the notion of multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Questions such as “how” and “in what ways” are common in qualitative research, as they encourage in-depth study and do not assume one correct answer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is especially suitable for addressing questions about how social experiences are created and given meaning, as it seeks to better understand the complex interrelationships between various influencing factors in a specific situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Researcher’s Philosophical Assumptions and Beliefs

As a qualitative researcher, understanding that my beliefs have an impact on the way that I conduct research, it is my responsibility to make explicit the assumptions that led to the choice of a qualitative paradigm. My reflection, especially during the stages of the study design and later during data analysis, focussed on the philosophical assumptions relating to a stance toward the nature of reality (ontology), how I, the researcher, know what I know (axiology), the

language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology) (Creswell, 2013). Next, I describe my position on these philosophical assumptions and highlight how my philosophical stance fits within the qualitative paradigm.

Ontological beliefs. As a qualitative researcher, I embrace the worldview of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013). Congruent with a socio-constructivist paradigm, I believe that individuals seek understanding of their experiences in the world in which they live, resulting in varied and multiple meanings of reality. I am aware that the social conditions and perceived meanings found within communities are fluid and changeable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The construction of understanding is shaped by social interactions within participants' cultural and historical contexts. As a result, a qualitative researcher addresses the process of interactions, as well as the context in which they occur for participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and recognizes that their own backgrounds also shape their interpretations of the data. Reality is not only constructed by me, the researcher, but also by the various participants and readers of the study. My intent is to report on the multiple realities articulated by participants by relying as much as possible on their views of the situation being studied – in this case, how they build understanding of how to teach reading. To that end, I asked open-ended questions, carefully “listened” to participants' verbal and non-verbal responses, and included direct quotes in the case descriptions in order to more accurately reflect the varied perspectives on the situation being studied (Creswell, 2013).

Axiological beliefs. The axiological assumption that characterizes qualitative research is that all research is biased and value-laden (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers, especially, feel the responsibility to make explicit what those biases and values are. Qualitative researchers position themselves in the study they are conducting by actively recognizing and reporting how

their background (e.g., personal, professional, cultural, and historical experiences) informs their worldview and influences the way they conduct the study and interpret the data. In the next section, I reflect on the beliefs that have shaped this study. I also believe that no matter how carefully I try to acknowledge and minimize the impact of my bias, it still had an impact on how I conducted this research.

Rhetorical beliefs. Qualitative researchers tend to write the research study in a personal, narrative, descriptive form (i.e., use of metaphor, first-person pronoun, story structure, direct quotes) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). A personal, descriptive, and narrative rhetoric allows for a richer description of the study context, participants, and processes (Creswell, 2013). Erickson (1986) used the term *particular description* to refer to a type of writing characterized by the use of quotes from participants, quotes from field notes, and narrative vignettes to help the research context ‘come alive’ as much as possible. Qualitative research also distinguishes itself by a specific glossary of terms such as “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In comparison, quantitative research’s glossary includes terms such as “internal validity,” “external validity,” “generalizability,” and “objectivity”. Additionally, words such as “discover,” “explore,” “meaning,” and “understanding” reflect the inductive nature of a qualitative paradigm and are often used in writing purpose statements and research questions (Creswell, 2013). The reporting on findings in this study was written in an informal and descriptive style because I believed that a rich description of the context and processes, with many “injections” from the voices from participants, would be the most effective in addressing the aims of the study. That aim was gaining a deeper understanding – both for myself, as the researcher, as well as the readers – of the processes involved in becoming a teacher of reading from the point of view of the

participants in the study.

Methodological beliefs. The methodology of qualitative research is characterized as emerging, inductive, and shaped by the researcher's background and experience in collecting and analyzing the data (Creswell, 2013). During the collection stage, the qualitative researcher builds flexibility into the research design in order to be responsive to the changing conditions of the study in progress (Merriam, 2001). As an example, the research questions may need to change in the middle of the study to better understand the research problem, and may also impact the initial data collection strategy in order to accommodate those revised questions. During the data analysis, the researcher develops an increasingly detailed knowledge of the topic being studied (Creswell, 2013). As a qualitative researcher, I believe that a flexible and emergent design was best suited to explore the subjective and unpredictable nature of participants' meaning-making processes. A flexible stance and design also supported my goal of remaining focussed on participants' needs and perspectives as the driving force for the study. Additionally, as my study aimed to understand the ways in which participants built understanding from their experiences, it was important that I establish a relationship of trust and empathy, especially during the direct contact in the face-to-face interviewing process. Following Johnson and Christensen's (2012) advice, I made every effort to employ an empathetic stance with the intention of seeking understanding without judgement. I also believed that, during interviewing, I needed to have enough distance to remain aware to tease and explore the ideas shared by interviewees, not just share assumptions (Seidman, 2013). By being open, sensitive, respectful, aware and responsive I attempted to minimize participants' feelings of discomfort in sharing potentially very personal experiences and in not feeling judged for their beliefs. The qualitative research process is viewed as collaborative, with researcher and participants working together to construct understanding

and with each participant playing an essential and equally powerful role. A reflective, respectful and open stance also supported me in exploring the effect of biases, attitudes, and predispositions, from both myself and participants, on the interaction and data elicited during interviewing (Seidman, 2013).

Researcher's Positioning within the Study

My worldview is situated within a socio-constructivist paradigm in which knowledge is socially mediated and constructed in our interactions with the world and the communities and people around us (Creswell, 2013). As a result, there is no all-encompassing “truth” about reality for a researcher to “uncover”; simply individuals’ perceptions of reality. The varied contexts (i.e., historical, cultural, professional, etc.) in which social interactions occur are very important in mediating and moderating the subjectivities of perceptions (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). Congruent with a qualitative stance, I relied on participants’ interpretations of their experiences and sought to examine the inherent complexity of their personal views in order to develop more coherent insights about their meaning-making processes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

While my insights and experiences are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the situation being studied (Yin, 2014), I regard participants as the experts of their own reality (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I view research as a collaborative process, with myself and participants as co-constructors of understanding. I believe that participants’ perspectives, in their own words, must be privileged throughout the research process. For this reason, I believe that the use of open-ended questions offered an optimum opportunity for participants to share their developing perspectives in their voice.

In terms of my personal background, articulated extensively in Chapter One, I was taken with books and the world of stories since an early age. Learning to read came easily to me before

the start of formal schooling. I have always enjoyed the world of schools. Promoting reading and the love of books has been a central driving force in becoming and remaining a teacher, including my work as a teacher educator in literacy learning. This passion for creating successful reading environments for students brought me to graduate studies, and to the focus of this study. I acknowledge that my prior knowledge and assumptions about the research topic, in this case, my socio-constructivist orientation towards reading pedagogy, had an influence on the interactions with the participants and the interpretation of meanings. To conclude, the following statements represent my epistemological beliefs and designate my position within the study:

1. Participants are experts of their own reality;
2. There is no single interpretation of reality;
3. Our experiences influence what we believe, and what we believe informs our actions;
4. Identifying and reflecting on our assumptions is necessary for changing them;
5. Learning is socially constructed and can be facilitated through interactions in classroom communities (e.g., reading processes course);
6. Data are value-laden in nature and researchers must actively reflect on and document their own values and biases throughout the research process;
7. A qualitative approach and processes support this study's aim to give voice to unique and complex experiences.

How the Qualitative Paradigm Supported the Current Study

In this section, I highlight how framing the current study within the qualitative paradigm was appropriate for answering the study's research question, as well as in achieving the study's overall purpose. That purpose involved exploring the processes of becoming a teacher of reading. The qualitative paradigm enabled me to (1) privilege the voices and perspectives of

three preservice teachers as they constructed their understanding. That understanding was being mediated through interactions in the natural settings of a reading processes course and a practicum placement. A qualitative approach, through the use of open-ended interviewing and reflective writings, also allowed me to (2) tap into preservice teachers' thinking as it evolved. Additionally, a qualitative paradigm supported me in (3) developing a rich, robust, and in-depth understanding of the participants' processes of becoming teachers of reading.

Privileging my participants' perspectives. The goal of qualitative research is to examine how things look from different vantage points (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). This paradigm supported the central purpose of this study, which was to gain a deeper understanding of how three preservice teachers interpreted their experiences during their preparation, while developing an understanding of how to teach reading. A qualitative approach encourages focussing on and privileging participants' own frames of references (emic perspective) and in understanding their perspectives of reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). This insider's view was a crucial element of this study. While I was the one who wrote the final interpretation of participants' meanings, I took great care in accurately representing the "voice" of the participants. I infused the research report with many direct quotes and narratives from participants, thus providing a forum for readers to "hear" the voices of participants (Taylor et al., 2016). Additionally, aware that I could not eliminate my influence during my interactions with participants, I attempted to minimize those effects, or at least understand them, when interpreting the data. For these reasons, positioning my study within the qualitative paradigm supported my ability to privilege preservice teachers' voices, perceptions, and experiences rather than an *outside* perspective of their experiences.

Focussing on participants' perceptions. Understanding preservice teachers' experiences, as well as the meaning they ascribed to those experiences, required a rich description of those experiences. A qualitative paradigm was very appropriate for research aiming to understand the human experience. A qualitative approach is interested in understanding the complexities of everyday life and the meanings that individuals ascribe to those experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative paradigm is congruent with my socio-constructivist view that reality is socially constructed and may be interpreted in multiple ways. This awareness of the subjectivity of "truth" guided my research – exploring and embracing reality from varied vantage points, always keeping the focus on participants' lived experiences. Qualitative interviewing is flexible and dynamic and allows a researcher to probe for these different vantage points. Taylor et al. (2016) use the phrase *in-depth interviewing* to refer to the face-to-face encounters between the researcher and respondents. The face-to-face encounters were directed toward understanding respondents' perspectives on their lives, or situations, as expressed in their own words. The in-depth interview was modelled after a conversation between equals, rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange. My role as the research instrument was particularly important in this exchange. The role required me to not only obtain answers, but to take time to establish a rapport with respondents. Qualitative researchers make efforts to empathize and identify with participants in order to better understand how participants 'see' things (Taylor et al., 2016). Additionally, the qualitative researcher is responsive to the context, adapts techniques to the circumstances, explores anomalous responses and probes for clarification of respondents' answers (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Being the primary instrument for data collection in this study afforded me the opportunity to spend significant time with my participants while listening to their stories and experiences. It also allowed me to adapt

the questions to help them to clarify their thinking and to probe to further understand their responses.

Developing a rich, robust, in-depth understanding. Congruent with the qualitative paradigm and in order to better understand participants' evolving perspectives, it was important to understand and describe the context facilitating those evolving perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I interviewed the course instructor to understand the epistemological and pedagogical beliefs that informed the teaching and spent some time observing in the classroom. A rich contextual understanding assisted me in describing how all the parts of a phenomenon worked together to form a complete whole (Merriam, 2001). I was able to examine the pedagogical context and complexity of social interactions that took place within the natural setting of the classroom community and to explore their influence on participants' evolving perspectives. Spending time in the participants' natural setting and listening to their stories and experiences provided me with an opportunity to create a more robust understanding of their meaning-making process. The desire to more deeply understand participants' experiences from their point of view led me to write detailed, thick descriptions and observations, which arose from seeking empathetic understanding and contributed to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry. Thick descriptions of the context and findings, through the use of participants' quotes from interviews and writings, also help the reader to better understand the experience without having been there (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The level of depth and detail in this study resulted in an overall robust insight into how participants developed their unique understanding of how to teach reading.

Multiple Case Study Design

Case studies aim to understand the complexity of a contemporary phenomenon (i.e., a

case), studied in its natural setting, in the richest and most complete way possible, and through the use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 2014). The main distinguishing characteristic of a case study, in relation to other types of qualitative research designs, is the focus on delimiting the unit of analysis (or case) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote that qualitative designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory and narrative inquiry were defined by the focus of the study and not by the unit of analysis. A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Cases are bounded by the time in which the study happens and the activity in which the participants are involved. Researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to provide depth and richness of data about a case. In this study, the “case” was three preservice teachers learning to teach reading. Three main contextual features bounded the study: (1) a readings processes course and a six-week practicum; (2) the research question; and, (3) the three participants. A multiple case study was the most appropriate design because it enabled me, the researcher, to explore similarities and differences within and between cases with the goal to compare findings across cases in order to uncover patterns (Yin, 2014). One of the strengths of the multiple case study method is that it allows the researcher to develop a deeper understanding and a more convincing argument compared to examining the data for only one case study (Vannoni, 2015). Multiple case studies increase the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, I had to exercise caution and remember that, as Miles and Huberman (1994) argued, one limitation of the collective case study was that the researcher tended to focus more on comparing the case studies than in writing a rich description for each

one. I used a multiple case study with a flexible design, encompassing three single-case studies of preservice teachers as they developed an understanding of how to teach reading.

Details of selected case. The target population for the study were teacher candidates enrolled in a reading processes course in the Faculty of Education at a comprehensive university in Western Canada. Further criteria for recruitment was interest in teaching reading in K-3 and availability for a final interview after the semester was completed. I chose the study participants through purposive sampling, which suited the goal of my research, as I wanted to “discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore [I] must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). I believed that this population would provide rich information about the study’s focus on how preservice teachers developed an understanding of reading pedagogy. Once ethics’ approval from the university was obtained, I consulted the course calendar and contacted the reading instructor assigned to teach the reading processes course in the following semester. I did not know the instructor prior to this first contact. I sent an email with information about the research (see Appendix A for recruitment script) and offered to meet in person if the instructor was interested in knowing more. At the in-person meeting, I shared a recruitment flyer (see Appendix B) and secured commitment and consent from the instructor to share course documents (i.e., syllabus, course textbook), to engage in an interview, and to set two dates to conduct class observations (see Appendix C). I believed that information from a review of the course documents, interview with the instructor, and class observations would serve to contextualize and clarify the setting in which the participants were developing their understanding of how to teach reading. The next step was to recruit participants. Towards the end of the fall semester, and prior to the cohort starting the reading processes course, I received an invitation to recruit from the instructor of the first literacy course in which the cohort was

enrolled. That course had a focus on writing and oral language. Recruitment occurred in person, with a full explanation of the study (see Appendix D) and a verbal invitation to participate. I offered a research flyer (see Appendix E) and contact details to those interested in participating. I had intended to accept the first eight preservice teachers who showed interest, but after the recruiting session I had nine students who were keen to participate and granted their signed consent (see Appendix F). As the focus of the study, I found it very compelling to take an in-depth look at how PSTs developed an understanding of teaching early reading. As a result, I selected the students who had practicum placements in primary grades, as they would offer a more robust understanding of this process. There were four students who met this criterion; however, one of the students was placed in a French Immersion class and, consequently, was excluded. Thus, three participants with practicum placements in primary classes were selected. As indicated in Table 3.1, these three participants brought a diversity of attitudes and experiences towards reading and the teaching of reading. All names included in the study are pseudonyms selected by participants.

Table 3.1

Case Participants – Practicum Placement and Initial Attitudes Toward Teaching Reading

Participant	Age group	Experiences with home and schooling	Attitude toward reading and teaching reading	Practicum Placement
Sara	Mid 20s	Can't remember how she learned to read; Precocious reader; nurturing home literacy environment; successful student; mixed experiences in school.	Loves to read; very positive views on teaching reading.	Grade 2
Marsha	Early 20s	Learned to read easily; nurturing home literacy environment; successful in school.	Loves to read; very positive views on teaching reading.	Grade 1

Gillian	Mid 20s	Difficulty learning to read; diagnosed with a learning disability; spent time in resource room; mixed experiences with school.	Does not like reading; apprehensive about teaching reading.	Grade 3
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Overview of the Study

Data collection took place over a period of eight months, organized into a series of four phases. Table 3.2 summarizes the four phases of data collection. A more detailed description of each phase follows.

Table 3.2

Data Collection Timeline

Date	Engagement with Participants
October	Recruitment of participants <i>Phase 1 (before reading processes course)</i>
November	Interview 1 <i>Phase 2 (during reading processes course)</i>
January	Reading processes course begins Reflective writing prompt 1 Interview with course instructor
February	Classroom observation 1 Classroom observation 2 <i>Phase 3 (after reading processes course)</i>
Beginning April	Interview 2
April to May	Reflective writing prompt 2 Practicum <i>Phase 4 (after practicum)</i>
June	Interview 3

Phase 1 took place in the fall, with the intent of interviewing participants before they started instruction in reading pedagogy in the following semester. At that time, students were participating in a class with a focus on writing processes and oral language. Interviewing the participants before the reading processes course gave me an opportunity to explore what beliefs about the teaching of reading they were bringing to their preparation, and probe as to the influences on those literacy beliefs. Conducting the first interview in the fall allowed me to collect information to compare with subsequent interviews to explore how preservice teachers' thinking interacted with course content and field experiences to construct their understanding of how to teach reading.

Phase 2 took place at the start of the winter semester. It was important to collect information at this stage to better understand the context in which PSTs were mediating understanding. As a result, an interview with the course instructor took place at this time (see Appendix G for interview questions). The interview questions meant to probe the instructor's biography as a reader and teacher of reading, as well as goals, instructional approaches and pedagogical foci for the reading processes course. After the interview, the instructor also shared the course syllabus which included information regarding goals, structure and the required textbook for the course. I ordered the textbook to examine at a later time. Also, after the interview with the course instructor, we agreed on two dates for me to visit the class. Those visits took place during the students' second class in January and later during a class in mid-February. The classroom visits were intended to provide further information regarding the context that was mediating participants' meaning-making processes. I collected notes on main ideas shared by the instructor and the overall set-up of the learning in the class (e.g., group work, instructional approaches, resources, multimedia, and so on). During this early stage of their program, I also

asked participants to engage in producing a reflective writing piece. This personal account reflected on the prompts that were provided by me to elicit their feelings, attitudes and beliefs about their experiences with reading, the perceived influences on those beliefs and their understandings about the teaching of reading.

In Phase 3, at the end of their reading processes course, I conducted a second interview with participants. The purpose for that interview was to inquire into participants' perspectives on their learning during the course and to probe for influences in their evolving understandings. A week later, and before the start of their practicum, I asked students to engage in their final reflective writing, which had the same intent as the second interview – to reflect on the influences of coursework on their thinking.

Lastly, in Phase 4, a couple of weeks after practicum had ended, I conducted the third and final interview, the purpose of which was to inquire into the ways that participants' initial beliefs had interacted with their coursework and practicum in developing their understanding of how to teach reading. Throughout the data collection phases of the study, before each interview and reflective writing, participants were reminded of the option to withdraw from the study without having to provide an explanation. Participants were also informed that they could request that their data not be included in the study up to the conclusion of the data collection timeline.

Data Collection

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use different sources of evidence (Yin, 2014) that can be used for triangulation and can contribute to a more “accurate” interpretation of the findings. The multiple sources of data chosen for the proposed study allowed me to clarify meanings from different perspectives, and to identify redundancy in findings (Patton, 2015) or converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014) in participants' developing

understanding of how to teach reading. The triangulation of the data sources selected for the study (see Table 3.3) strengthened the study's construct validity. Triangulation allowed for the development of lines of convergence (and/or non-convergence) and conferred more confidence in the findings that, as a result, were likely to be more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2014). Triangulation is especially relevant to support the focus of this multiple case study, which aims to explore and report on participants' subjective and therefore multiple interpretations of their experiences. Triangulation of the multiple data sources helped to ensure that participants' perspectives were rendered as accurately as possible (Yin, 2014).

Table 3.3

Data Collection Sources

How do preservice teachers develop an understanding of how to teach reading?		
Biographies	Reflections on participation in a reading processes course	Reflections on their practicum
Data Sources	Data Sources	Data Sources
Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Reflective Writing 1	Reflective Writing 2	
	Interview with course instructor	
	Class Observations 1 & 2	
	Review of course documents: syllabus, textbooks	

In summary, the data collection included the following methods: one semi-structured face-to-face interview with the course instructor; review of pertinent documents relative to the context of

the reading processes course, such as course syllabus and required textbook; two classroom observations; two semi-structured reflective writings (through the use of a prompt); and three open-ended and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each of the three participants.

Interviews. Yin (2014) claims that interviews are essential sources of case study information. Qualitative interviews enable a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of a participant's beliefs, experiences, and practices (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Research interviews are "conversations that have a structure and a purpose" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 5) with the intent to enter into the other person's perspective (Patton, 2015). Yin (2014) argued that case study interviews required the researcher to operate on two levels simultaneously: satisfying the needs of the line of inquiry, while also putting forth *friendly* and *nonthreatening* questions in the open-ended interview. Individual interviews allow participants to express their views without being directly influenced by what others are saying. Participants are also more likely to feel more at ease to say what they really believe, with less fear of being judged by others.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for case studies (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), ensuring that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each interviewee (Patton, 2015). I used an interview guide and asked predetermined questions (see Appendix H for list of questions); additionally, I used unanticipated follow-up questions designed to probe the issues more deeply. This format allowed participants to express themselves more openly and to define and clarify issues from their own perspectives (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The questions for interviews were designed to explore the research question guiding the study. Questions inquired into participants' biographies as readers and the ways in which those biographies were influenced by participation in a reading processes course and a six-week practicum placement. Interviews were held at a time and place convenient for participants and

each one was approximately one hour in duration. The first interview happened before the reading processes course began; the second occurred after it ended; the third was held following their practicum. Prior to each interview, I emailed participants to seek on-going consent and to remind them of their option to withdraw from the study (see Appendix I).

Interview one. Interviewing participants before the reading processes course gave me an opportunity to collect data as to who they were as readers and what beliefs about teaching reading they were bringing to their teacher preparation program. It was also important to probe into what had been the influences on their entering beliefs. The questions were divided into three main sections. Section I was designed to obtain information about their reading history: what their experiences were in learning to read, and significant people, resources and school strategies they considered important in their reading development. In Section II, questions probed into who they were as readers today. Some questions asked were, “What is reading to you?”, “What types of reading materials do you like? Dislike?”, and “What routines and habits do you have in relation to reading?” In Section III, I wanted to inquire into their understandings about the teaching of reading prior to participation in a reading processes course. I asked questions such as, “How do children learn to read?” and “How will you teach reading?” Finally, a group of questions investigated their notions of what they thought their students would be like (e.g., reading experiences, interests, skills), and their feelings about becoming a teacher of reading. I ended the interview by asking the participants to share and explain their metaphor for: “Reading is...” and “Teaching reading is...”.

Interview two. Interviewing the participants again at the end of their participation in a reading processes course provided the opportunity to explore the ways in which participants’ entering beliefs had interacted with course content. Some of questions that helped to provide

insight into this interaction were: “What were the most significant aspects of the course?”, “What concepts do you agree/disagree with?”, and “What has changed/not changed in your understanding as a result of your participation in the course?”.

Interview three. Finally, interviewing participants after the six-week practicum allowed me to investigate how all the experiences – entering beliefs, participation in the reading processes course and practicum teaching – interacted with their evolving understanding of how to teach reading. The questions centred on providing participants with opportunities to describe how they taught reading during their practicum, what influenced their planning and teaching decisions, and on any changes (or not) in their understanding about the teaching of reading. Finally, to compare with the responses provided in interview one, I asked participants to articulate their feelings about becoming teachers of reading and to share and explain their metaphor for: “Reading is...” and “Teaching reading is...”. I concluded the last interview with the question, “How has participation in this study impacted you in your journey towards becoming a teacher of reading?”

Audios of all interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate recording of participants’ responses and to enable me to consider participants’ gaps and silences in the analysis and interpretation of their responses. Transcription took place, at the end of the data collection stage, by myself and a professional transcription service. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriptionist prior to beginning the transcription process (see Appendix J).

Reflective writings. In addition to the face-to-face interviews, reflective writings served as “personal documents”, defined as “any first-person narrative that describes an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011, p. 133). These writings provide a snapshot into what the participant thinks is important, their attitudes, beliefs and view of the

world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked students to further reflect on their experiences by providing them with prompts (see Table 3.3 and Appendices M and N), and explained that the prompts provided a reference point for their reflections, and even though I did not impose format restrictions, I recommended a 500-word count. The guiding questions for the face-to-face interviews informed the prompts used for the reflective writings. Their written responses allowed participants to reflect and articulate their thinking through a different medium that could be used to complement the data collected through interviews one and two. Prior to each reflective writing, I emailed participants to seek on-going consent and to remind them of their option to withdraw from the study (see Appendix K).

Reflective writing one. The first reflective writing (see Appendix L) was a complement to interview one. It took place after the first interview and at the very beginning of the reading processes course. The prompt, “past influences (i.e., people, experiences, etc.) on your present understanding about teaching reading” allowed participants to write about their feelings and experiences in learning to read. The prompt, “a description of how those influences have contributed to your present understanding about teaching reading” supported my comprehension of how participants developed their current understandings, which were explored through the last prompt, “your present understanding about teaching reading”.

Reflective writing two. The second and last reflective writing (see Appendix M) took place at the end of the reading processes course. The prompts: “How did the preservice reading course affect your understanding of how to teach reading?”; “What aspects/concepts in the course were most significant to you?”; “Did the reading course contribute to any changes in your prior beliefs about reading and teaching reading? If so, in what ways?”; and, “What has remained the same about your beliefs prior to starting the course?” allowed participants to articulate how

their participation in a reading processes course had influenced their beliefs and understanding of how reading was taught. The written responses were used to triangulate responses from the interviews in order to confer additional credibility to the findings.

Classroom observations. Qualitative observations are those in which the researcher writes field notes focussed on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Guided by observation protocol (see Appendix N), I recorded my observations by way of handwritten notes that focussed on two observations of the reading processes course in which participants were immersed. The notes were organized in a password-protected computer folder labelled 'Field Notes from Classroom Observations' for easy identification and access. The class observations enabled me to enter the world of the case and attempt to capture the instructor's messages, instructional approaches, terminology, mood and other affective components to better understand the real-world context from which participants were constructing meaning (Yin, 2014). I described the lesson activities, pedagogical approaches and main messages in the instruction. I also recorded my thoughts on the observations immediately afterwards. My role in the observations was that of non-participating observer. The two opportunities for direct observation of each of the approximately 2-hour classes were scheduled in consultation with the instructor. The observations took place at the beginning of the course (class 2) and half-way through the course (i.e., 90 days after the first observation). No audio or video recordings were made of the observations. Field notes from the two observations served as another source of evidence to provide an opportunity to triangulate and corroborate findings from other sources of data, such as interviews, reflective writings, and the examination of course documents.

Documents. In case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and

extend evidence from other sources (Yin, 2014). I reviewed the course syllabus and the required textbook for the reading processes course. I made notes regarding the main messages, terminology and instructional approaches regarding the teaching of reading. This information supported me in understanding the artifacts and the context that were mediating preservice teachers' developing sense-making. I was aware that documents needed to be carefully used and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events (Yin, 2014). As with individual participants, documents are the product of bias, which needs to be considered in their analysis. This is one more reason why it was useful to interview the course instructor, so as to clarify meanings and content in the course syllabus and for the instructor to explain the rationale for choice of assignments and reading requirements. It was also important to undertake classroom observations to corroborate the information in the course documents shared with me at the start of the course, and the messages, activities and instructional approaches used in the classroom. I needed to remain focussed on the research question of the study in order to triage the documents by their apparent centrality to the inquiry.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in the current study and a detailed overview of the data collection methods and processes. The eight-month study followed a qualitative approach to explore the ways in which three preservice teachers developed their understanding of how to teach reading. Data were collected throughout the study from various sources. Those sources included interviews, reflective writings, classroom observations and a review of course documents (e.g., textbooks and syllabus). The next two chapters highlight the data analysis process and detail the findings and the themes that arose from this analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, I share the findings from my doctoral study, which aimed to examine the journey of three preservice teachers enroute to becoming teachers of reading. Before presenting the findings, I restate my research question, provide an overview of the data sources, and introduce the research participants. I also describe the open coding process I followed to analyze the different data sources. Subsequently, I organize the description of the findings into two sections. In Section 1, I describe the reading processes course, drawing on an interview with the instructor, field notes from my two observations of the course, and review of both the syllabus and textbook. In Section 2, I describe the three individual case studies, drawing on the three transcripts of interviews and the two written reflections.

This descriptive multi-case study sought the answer to: What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?

The research question was answered through a detailed analysis of three main data sources: foremost, there were nine transcripts of three interviews with each of the three preservice teachers. These took place before and after the reading processes course, and after practicum. Secondly, participants provided six prompted reflective writings to probe for their understanding about the teaching of reading before and after participation in the reading processes course. Thirdly, field notes were produced based on two observations of the reading preparation course and a transcribed interview with the course instructor, which took place at the start of the course. Minor sources of data were artifacts from the reading processes course (i.e., syllabus and course textbook).

Introducing the Participants

The three female participants were enrolled full-time in a 16-month elementary post-degree professional program (PDPP) at a university in western Canada. In this teacher education program, preservice teachers (PSTs) enrolled in two literacy courses: one focused on oral and written language; the second (which is discussed in my study) focused on reading processes and practices. In addition, the PSTs completed two practicum placements: one in the first half of the program for nine weeks, and one in the second half for six weeks (which is discussed in this study). In addition to learning about pedagogy in the reading processes course, participants were also learning about a new provincial curriculum emphasizing competency-based and personalized approaches to learning.

To provide context, I offer the following introduction to the three preservice teachers (with pseudonyms):

- Sara is 26 years old and has a prior undergraduate degree in history. She has no prior experience teaching or working with children except for a brief job as a nanny to a four-year old. Sara did her placement with a grade 2 class of 23 students.
- Marsha is 23 years old and has a prior undergraduate degree in English. She has no prior experience teaching or working with children. Marsha did her placement with a grade 1 class of 23 students. She requested her placement to be at her former school and with her former grade 1 teacher.
- Gillian is 26 years old and has a prior undergraduate degree in social sciences. She has no prior experience teaching or working with children. Gillian did her placement with a grade 3 class of 19 students.

In the next section, I describe the open coding process for the data sources that contribute to our understanding of the reading processes course, and the responses of the three participants to the course. The examination of the data on the PSTs' biographies, along with their reflections of participating in the reading processes course and in practicum, enabled me to explore the development of the PSTs' understanding of how to teach reading.

Data Analysis – Open Coding Process

At the end of the data collection period, and after all interviews had been transcribed and field notes processed, each piece of data was organized in electronic folders and identified by participant, data type, and date. I started by reading the transcripts of the interviews, reflective writings, and observation field notes several times to get a sense of the data as a whole. Creswell and Creswell (2018) write that this is an important first step in getting to know the general ideas in the data and to reflect on its overall meaning. Clarke (2005) also recommends an initial period of “digesting and reflecting” on the data before actual coding begins (p. 84). Based on my early impressions of the data (Leavy, 2017), I decided to analyze first the data regarding the course taken by the participants to prepare them for teaching reading (Figure 4.1). This data set included artifacts from the reading processes course (text and syllabus), the instructor interview, and classroom observations. I began with a thorough review of the course syllabus and textbook and noted main content and approaches to the teaching of reading. The review of the syllabus also provided important information regarding the instructor's goals and the structure of the course. Next, I completed the first cycle of coding on the interview with the instructor and field notes on observations.

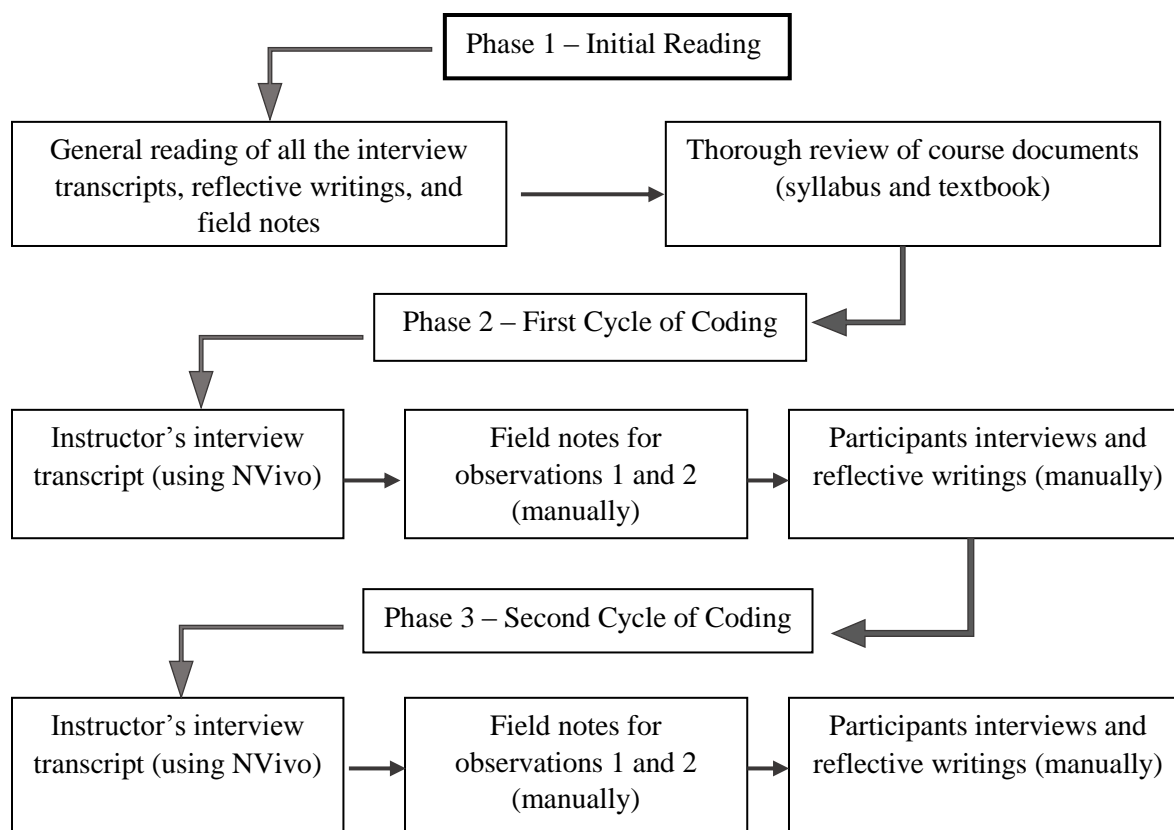


Figure 4.1. Sequence of data analysis and coding

Reading processes course: First cycle of coding. After the initial readings, I began a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to make sense of the data. Through coding, (i.e., assigning a word or phrase to segments of data), I was able to begin the process of reducing, summarizing, and classifying the data (Leavy, 2017). I began by carefully reading the instructor's interview transcript. Using NVivo software (QSR International, Version 12 Plus, 2018), I read line-by-line, assigning code(s) to units of meaning, and highlighted relevant quotes. During the first cycle of coding, the various codes for the interview with the instructor were placed into three categories: memories of learning to read, memories of teaching reading, and design of the reading course. Next, I analysed the field notes from observations one and two, respectively. I used manual coding for the field notes and subsequent data sources. From coding the two sets of field notes from class observations, the following categories emerged: course

content, teaching approaches used to facilitate PSTs' understanding, and messages about teaching reading. After completing a first cycle of coding with the reading processes course data sources, I began the analysis of the participants' data. I switched from using NVivo to manual coding because the software did not represent my coding in a way that was sufficiently visual and tangible for me. I found it more helpful to print all transcripts and use highlighters, coloured markers and sticky notes to manually identify the codes and label categories, then writing them in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Participants: First cycle of coding. I analyzed the data in the following order: (1) first interview, followed by first reflective writing (to capture participants' biographies and initial understanding of how reading is taught); (2) second interview, followed by second reflective writing (to capture participants' perspectives on participating in the reading processes course and on their evolving understanding about reading pedagogy); and, (3) third interview (to explore participants' experiences during practicum and how their understanding of how reading is taught had evolved).

I carefully read the transcripts sentence-by-sentence and assigned a code for a unit of meaning. As an example, in the first interview, the passage:

Well, I know that when I came to school in kindergarten that I didn't very, hardly any reading skills. Um, I don't think that was because, like, it's not like I come from a background that like, an impoverished background or anything it's just that I just had a lot of trouble

was assigned the code "struggled learning to read." I repeated the same process for all transcripts. During this first cycle of coding, the categories that were generated were the result of grouping similar or seemingly related codes together (Saldaña, 2016). For example, some of the initial categories I developed through coding participants' first interview were: memories of

learning to read, memories of home, memories of school, and understanding about teaching reading. In Table 4.1, I offer an example of the codes used in the first cycle of coding for participants' memories of school.

Table 4.1

First Cycle of Coding for Interview 1 – Sample codes for memories of school

Approaches used (School reinforced strategies used at home; Phonics worksheets; Letter forming worksheets; Sight words worksheets; Phonics games; Grammar worksheets; Spelling tests; Read texts from overhead; Answer comprehension & vocabulary questions; Summarizing articles; Novel studies; Students reading aloud; Silent reading; reading buddies); Strategies disliked (Comply/defy relationship with forced reading; School assigned reading monotonous and irrelevant; Painful to read books she could not comprehend; No interest because could not relate to life; Dull classrooms; Corrected for mispronouncing words; Approaches not taught in context; Not relevant to life); Strategies liked (Loved novel studies when option to choose book; positive memories of grade 11-12 teacher; Influenced love of reading in school; Encouraged independence in reading; Favourite memory; Being read to by librarian; Influenced love of being read to in school; Made reading interesting; Used expressive voice; Read “out of the corner of her eye”; Sitting in pods of three; Language support in resource room; Enjoyed going because of friends; nice teachers; appreciated choice; Grade 1 teacher gave fun activities; make movies); fake reading; looked at book instead of reading; read parts of books/keywords; enough to complete school work; stigma towards LD designation after grade 7; minimum work to get by.

In the above sample of participants' memories of school, they described approaches used in the teaching of reading and strategies they had either liked or disliked about their schooling.

Reading processes course: Second cycle of coding. Pattern coding was used in the second cycle because information from the first cycle was consolidated into more meaningful chunks (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes with similar meanings were merged, and irrelevant and redundant codes were removed. Table 4.2 displays the codes and categories on the second cycle of coding of the interview with the course instructor that took place at the start of the course. Questions were aimed to elicit the instructor's memories about her own early literacy development and her experience as a teacher of reading. The interview also probed for the

instructor's goals for the course, her main pedagogical values about teaching reading, and the teaching approaches she planned to use with the PSTs.

Table 4.2

Second Cycle of Coding for Interview with Course Instructor

<p>Early literacy experiences: precocious; learned to read before school; Memories of home: creative; linking of arts to reading and writing; fond books from childhood; home had more inviting opportunities than school; weekly trips to library and bookstore; parents were readers; mother 'gave me the gift of reading'; Memories of school: early experiences that 'crushed' her; teaching strategies disliked (worksheets; 'boring work to copy things off a chalkboard'); many positive memories (grade 12 teacher reading aloud from Macbeth, followed by discussion, then movie; passionate and joyful teachers; amazing education); teaching strategies liked (hands-on curriculum, learning outside, reading in school library; read alouds; play-based learning; project work; choice and freedom); love of printed text; never wants to read e-books; technology has robbed children from childhood experiences like hers.</p>
<p>Teacher of reading: kids prefer real books; technology as a tool but not a focus; young children need more social interaction, oral language work; teaching 'lifelong pursuit'; 'nobody has the answer to reading'; kids learn to read by reading; direct instruction; 'huge advocate' of Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) gradual release of responsibility model; balanced approach; address all strands; learners have different ways to approach text; kids need choice in reading; children guiding own learning; kids nowadays are not library users; doing reading online; hopes parents are reading to children; metaphor reading is 'joyful'; metaphor teaching reading is 'exciting and a huge honour and privilege'.</p>
<p>Design of reading course: Thoughts on PSTs (passionate; previous careers and degrees; understand teaching reading because of 16 years of schooling; some are parents; experts on what works and doesn't work); Goals for course: credibility; textbook written by teachers of reading; 'oral language is truly the biggest foundation for reading'; teach learning to read; teach reading to learn; equip with variety of strategies to invite and engage kids; connections to take away; Teaching approaches: think-alouds; actual student work; guests speakers; 'some listening, some doing, some viewing'; engagement; 'what it looks like inside a classroom'; reflections; flexible office hours; one-on-one with students; personal connections; checking for PSTs understanding; learn about students through their writing and assignments; address incorrect thinking; broaden portfolio of children's literature; create units; prepare for practicum; clear criteria; feedback before due date; Pedagogical values: 'there are no absolutes'; 'all children have different needs'; as you grow your practices change; need theory but know how it applies in the real world; give choice; find what you are passionate about; learning needs personal connections between teachers and students; memorable learning is dependent on the teacher'; will not have all the answers at end of course; need to be lifelong learners;</p>

Through coding of the instructor interview data displayed in Table 4.2, a set of categories emerged that were then used as headings for the reading processes course. These headings were:

instructor's early literacy and teaching experiences (including memories of home, schooling, and teaching reading); design of the reading processes course; and instructor's teaching approaches and pedagogical values. The course documents (syllabus and textbook) identified the goals, structure, and instructional approach espoused by the textbook. Finally, coding and analysis of the field notes from the two classroom observations provided additional information on the instructor's teaching approaches, lessons, and pedagogical values. I used the headings, codes, and quotes from these data sources to complete writing a description of the reading processes course. Next, I began the second cycle of analysis of the data from the three participants.

Participants: Second cycle of coding. I organized and displayed the codes and categories on a wall to better visualise and identify connections and patterns across each source (Figure 4.2). I organized the visual representation around three headings: *before reading course*, *after reading course*, and *after practicum*.

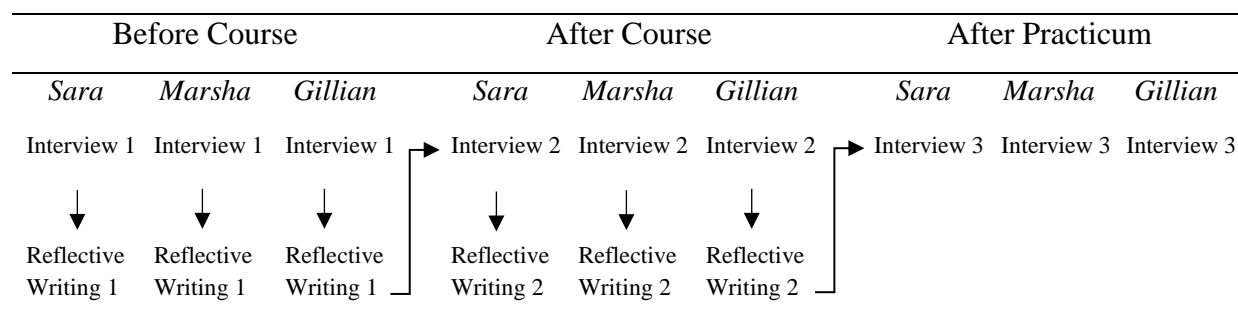


Figure 4.2. Visual display of participants' data coding steps during second cycle of coding

This display allowed me to examine the data (1) vertically, to investigate participants' perspectives at each of the three distinct stages of their preparation; and, (2) horizontally, to examine how they were developing an understanding of reading pedagogy across the three components of their preparation. Once all information was organized, I continued the process of data reduction by further analyses of the codes and categories under each heading and participant. I merged the interviews with the corresponding reflective writings, as they both had

probed for similar information. Tables 4.3 – 4.5 illustrate the codes and categories that led to the headings used in the individual case descriptions. The tables display the second round of coding for participants’ biographies and initial understanding of reading pedagogy, how their understanding evolved after participation in a reading processes course and, subsequently, after practicum. First, Table 4.3 displays codes for the participants’ first interview and reflective writing with questions.

Table 4.3

Second Cycle of Coding: Biographies Derived from Interview 1 and Written Reflection 1

<p>Early literacy experiences: cannot remember; precocious; bookworm; loves to read; likes books with real life connection; strong connection to books; not a reader; rarely reads for pleasure; struggled to learn to read; no strong connections with books; self-conscious about reading disability; ambivalence about technology (guilt from reading more online; “amazing technological tool”; e-books more environmentally friendly; frustrated about biased and untrue posts online; “loves all things about a physical book”; privilege growing up without technology; never read e-book).</p>
<p>Memories of home: parents read; siblings read well; sibling struggled in reading; trips to library; nurturing environment; memories of favourite books; influenced love of reading; books in the house; read to by parents; support with homework; parents listened to reading; asked to sound out unknown words; asked meaning of unfamiliar words; parents made book recommendations; technology at home associated with reading; parents not involved in school.</p>
<p>Memories of school: reinforced strategies used at home; worksheets (letter forming; phonics; sight words, grammar, comprehension); spelling tests; reading from overhead (comprehension & vocabulary questions); novel studies; students reading (aloud, silent, with buddies); fake reading; stigma towards LD; Strategies disliked: reading aloud; comply/defy relationship with assigned reading; monotonous and irrelevant; not taught in context; dull classrooms; Strategies liked: choice; independence in reading; being read to by librarian (made reading interesting; used expressive voice; read “out of the corner of her eye”); going to resource room because of friends.</p>
<p>Understandings about teaching reading: cannot remember; no experience; understanding from activities with parents; How children learn to read (starts with letters; combine with sounds; sounding out in head; visual associations; good for all; reading- writing connection; individual learning process; read aloud to students); memorizing and rereading same text - not reading, no value; Instructional approaches (one-to-one activity; correct misconceptions immediately; expand vocabulary; find reading levels; aim to challenge; relevant texts; classroom - positive place; make reading exciting; silent reading; technology to motivate; well stocked library; motivation different for every student; ‘right’ kind of practice; access all ways in which students learn; peer teaching; positive feedback; student-centered classroom); Teaching challenges (lack of confidence; students at different stages of development; contribute to disdain for reading; motivating students); Students (variety in skills, abilities, interests; technology savvy; less excited about reading; read for social connection and means</p>

to an end; less hands on with physical books); Teaching goals (turning students on to reading; make all readers comfortable and confident; experiences with real books; making school relevant; promote independence).

In the first interview and reflective writing, participants shared memories associated with their home environment and with schooling, and about how they saw themselves as readers. Prompted by the researcher's questions, PSTs also envisioned themselves as future teachers of reading and articulated their understanding of how children learn to read, the approaches they would use, and what they thought their students would be like (e.g., reading experiences, interests, skills). During the second cycle of coding for the first interview and reflective writing, a common set of categories emerged that were then used as the headings for the individual cases. These categories were: early literacy experiences (including memories of home and school); and envisioning themselves as teachers of early reading. Next, Table 4.4 displays the codes for how preservice teachers' understanding was informed by their university reading preparatory course. The codes are the result of analysis of the second interview and reflective writing. Questions aimed to probe for PSTs' perspective on their experiences learning about the teaching of reading in the course, and on how their understanding was evolving as a result of the course.

Table 4.4

Second Cycle of Coding: PSTs' Perspectives on the Reading Processes Course Derived from Interview 2 and Written Reflection 2

Perspectives on the reading course: positive; learning first steps of reading was most significant; want to focus on primary grades; reading process difficult to grasp; Content (learning to read and reading to learn; what young reader looks like; memorizing and visualizing words is pre-reading; build confidence in reading; fluency; pre-reading activities; literature circles; poetry café; novel study); Instructor (contagious passion for reading); Instruction (practical assignments; peer-to-peer teaching; collaboration; discussion; doing; less lecture; variety of activities to engage; some activities; scaffolding learning; variety of picture books for teaching; lots of resources and handouts; presentations; focus on practicum; practical textbook: realistic; built around foundational skills; good complement to class;).

Messages about teaching reading: teachers needs to show enthusiasm for reading; make reading fun, engaging; do what feels comfortable; read aloud; accept all the students can do (scribbles); encourage new skills; choice of texts to match skills and interest; cross-curricular texts with older students; fluency promotes comprehension; guessing at words valuable practice (shows confidence; knowledge of connection between letter and sound); encourage rereading (makes progress visible); make connections to texts (deepen comprehension); expose to variety of text types; students need to read silently and aloud to others; expand vocabulary; be creative; give choice; focus on process; student-centred; taught in context; purpose for reading; reading for comprehension.

PSTs' understanding after reading course: reading aloud does not stop in primary school; building blocks (memorization; visualization; vocabulary); talking with peers; exposing younger students to a variety of text forms; steps in learning to read (know letters and sounds before words; visualize on paper); leveled reading; big responsibility finding right level; foster confidence and comprehension; gained new ideas; "more aware of activities that might make students uncomfortable"; make some activities voluntary; empathy for learning from child perspective; diversity in readers; teach in context; importance of retelling; practice makes perfect; no step by step guide; **Confirmation of prior understanding** (understanding expanded on ways to engage readers; importance of repeated readings; modelling reading to young readers; match level of text to level of reader; read outside comfort zone; expose to new vocabulary; reading is difficult; value of making connections); **Areas of tension:** using books/activities that promote gender stereotyping; outdated books; activities out of comfort zone; still not prepared to teach reading; learning has to do with the learner (attitude; confidence) and not the teacher; need experience in schools; blocked information that will not use or agrees with; cannot make everyone love reading; everything needs to be fun; use every book for morals and messages; sappy activities; big themed units; lessons modeled for use with students were not inclusive; references to gender-based learning differences; choral reading not good practice; buddying good and struggling readers; still lots of questions; **Changes in prior understanding:** most learning as addition; misconceptions corrected; few prior beliefs; memorization step in learning to read; "if I know how to read I know how to teach reading"; teaching reading is complex; considerations for struggling readers; read aloud as teaching not just treat; read aloud to older students; favour fluency and comprehension over accuracy and phonics; learning doesn't happen naturally for all.

Table 4.4 shows participants' perspectives on course content, instruction, instructor, and on significant messages about teaching reading, during the second interview and reflective writing. Participants described how their understanding of reading pedagogy was evolving as a result of participation in the course. They indicated which aspects had either confirmed, caused cognitive tension, or changed their prior understanding. The codes and categories from the second cycle of coding led to the main headings used in the individual case descriptions. These two headings were: learning about teaching reading through the reading processes coursework; and PSTs'

evolving understanding about teaching early reading after the reading processes course. Next, Table 4.5 displays the codes for what PSTs' reflections on their practicum experience reveal about their understanding of reading pedagogy. The codes are the result of analysis of the third (final) interview. Questions probed for PSTs' perspective on their experiences while learning about the teaching of reading through their practicum placement; new understanding that evolved as they reflected on practicum; and their current beliefs about reading pedagogy.

Table 4.5

Second Cycle of Coding: PSTs Perspectives on the Practicum derived from Interview 3

<p>Perspectives on teaching reading in practicum: primary grades; diverse needs and many special education needs; good mentors; Mentor teacher routines (students struggled during silent reading; not enough book choice; competent readers; round-robin style; morning message; calendar activities; Smartboard to project worksheets; story-time; home reading program; spelling tests; word wall; low tech; choral reading; no stigma against reading; running records take too much time; formative assessment).</p>
<p>Teaching reading: poetry; reading in content areas; added anthologies to class collection; modeled reading; partner work; poetry café; iPad use; read aloud; students excited; respect; face-to-face conversations; sitting on the floor; creative writing; books as model; worksheets; asking questions; scaffolding; provided models; individual conferences; reading buddies; tons of practice;</p> <p>Influences on planning and teaching: literacy instructors in university (credible; years of experience in schools; read aloud; share purposes for activities); reading instructor (small opportunities daily to practice reading; to motivate you need to be motivated; gave feedback on unit plans; ask questions; activities; many examples; modelling); students (fun; interest; moods); PSTs (what she enjoyed as a student; personal interest); mentor teacher style.</p>
<p>How course prepared for practicum: literacy strongest courses; not prepared; more literacy courses with emphasis on early learning; practicum is more important; university courses theoretical; didn't realize how detailed planning needed to be; read alouds; asking questions before, during, after reading; not prepared for struggling readers; not enough strategies to motivate reluctant readers.</p>
<p>Influence of practicum on understanding: struggle with discipline; need to find voice; no models from past of positive discipline; you remember what is negative; past teachers leave an impact on you; comes out in times of stress; reading more important than expected; a flunk-school skill; practicum made theory in course visible; word walls; students positive reactions to things she thought were boring; student awareness in selecting own books; learning to read is just practice; visual memorization; how long some students take to learn; excitement for reading; silent reading as a positive time;</p>
<p>Understanding about teaching reading after practicum: tiny idea how to teach; started with little understanding; language and learning are very complex; does not know how to assess; lifelong pursuit; reading also needs to happen outside of school; competent readers read at home, struggling readers do</p>

not; parents need to be involved; many different ways to learn: rote, creative exploration; diversity of texts; reading is more than physical print; abundance of resources; empathy for young readers; broad range of activities to use with books; value fluency over accuracy; provide texts that interest students; do not trivialize little steps; flexibility; not every kid loves reading; advocate for 'out of the norm' kids; time to read; value of children's lit; classroom as a safe space.

In their final interview, participants described their observations of their practicum class and mentor (supervising) teacher's style, their own teaching reading experience, the influences on their planning and teaching, and their views on how the reading coursework had prepared them for practicum. They ended with an explanation of the influence of practicum on their understanding and an overview of their current understanding of reading pedagogy. During the second cycle of coding for the third interview, a common set of categories emerged that was used in the description of the individual cases. These categories were: learning about teaching reading through practicum; influence of practicum on understanding; and current beliefs about teaching early reading.

After completing a second cycle of analysis of the participants' data sources, and writing a case description for each participant, I began to cross-examine the data by comparing and contrasting the three cases. The full cross-case analysis is described in Chapter Five. Throughout the process of data analysis (first and second cycles of coding), I was aware of the influence of my own experiences as a student, teacher, teacher educator, and parent, on my role as co-constructor of the research narrative; specifically, in the selection, organization, and interpretation of concepts, codes, and categories in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I added credibility, rigour and validity to the meaning-making process through a deliberate effort to focus on and capture participants' voices through the use of numerous quotes, triangulation of data sources, and member checking (Yin, 2014). I did member checking for the interview with the instructor, and with participants' first interview and reflective writing. The previous section has

described and given examples of the data analysis process. The following section discusses the results of the study in two parts: (1) reading processes course data; and (2) three individual case studies.

Influence of the Reading Processes Course

The reading processes course provided an informative backdrop related to what PSTs were taught/exposed to during their preparation to becoming teachers of reading. This data set consisted of a transcribed interview with the course instructor, artifacts such as the required textbook and course syllabus, as well as field notes on two classroom observations.

Instructor's Literacy Learning and Teaching Background

This section provides an overview of the instructor's early literacy experiences, including memories of reading at home and at school. It also elucidates on the instructor's understanding of (and experience in) how reading is taught. The information for this section was derived from the analysis of the interview.

Reading was a big part of the instructor's life growing up, as she was a precocious reader and both of her parents were avid readers. "My mother would read books to me until I read them myself... she gave me the gift of reading," she said. Her home environment was supportive of the arts, and filled with books, people, and conversation. She recalled wanting to go home when she started attending school, because "home had more inviting opportunities." The instructor "deeply" valued the printed word over online texts.

As a child, the instructor had attended a Montessori school and later a private school. She had vivid memories of experiences that "crushed her." For instance, one time she was completing a reading workbook ahead of time, only to have the teacher erase all of her work because the expectation was that she needed to move at the pace of the class. As a result, the

instructor said:

... worksheets are not my favourite way to teach; I've always made a conscious effort to have open-ended work and allow children choices and not to degrade them publicly, humiliate them, because I was publicly humiliated for doing that and that should have been celebrated not greeted with, you bad child, erase it all.

Another time she was kept in class during recesses to catch up on copying board work because it took her too long to read what was on the board. It was her mom who eventually realized she needed glasses. "The teacher never thought of that, and yet, that's one of the first things I think of as a kindergarten teacher, check their vision and their hearing," she said.

Overall, the instructor enjoyed school in spite of a few negative experiences. She remembered teachers who "were passionate, they were joyful and they believed in the hands-on curriculum. We were out in the gardens planting food and we were reading books in the library and learning French every day and it was an amazing education." The instructor mentioned:

... lots of joyful times, mostly in the art studio; I had a very rich art background... and for me that became a voice... just a great way to express myself, and I like the art teachers because they were far more into choice, and they listened.

The teaching strategies she identified as the most positive throughout her schooling were: teachers reading aloud to the class; teachers providing choice; and hands-on and project work.

After university, the instructor worked for many years as an elementary teacher. From her experiences teaching early reading, she believed that children learned to read by reading, and that the models of direct instruction and Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) gradual release of responsibility were effective in supporting students in becoming readers. She claimed that "there has to be a balance between the teacher teaching and students working" and that we "need to address all the strands" because "our learners all have different ways of approaching text". For the instructor "teaching reading is exciting and a huge honour and privilege" as well as a

“lifelong pursuit”, one in which you have to continuously try to know more so that “you can be a better teacher.” Regarding the use of technology, the instructor used document cameras when teaching, but felt that “kids never seemed to like the document camera as much as they did when (she) would leave the books on the chalkboard ledge and they’d go and pour over them”. She used some websites and visits to the computer lab as tools, but not a main focus, particularly, she said, “as I taught young children and I wanted them to have more social interaction and oral language work and communication with one another than I did with a screen or through a screen.” The instructor also believed that children should be able to read books of their own choosing and expressed concern for the way that some teachers used leveled books. She said, “they are used in a way that sends a subliminal message that no, you can’t read those books yet, and maybe we are limiting children, um, because I believe in children guiding their own learning, they seek out their own levels of practice and they know when they need it.” She hoped that parents were reading to their children, but suspected that children nowadays were not library users and that they probably did a great deal of their reading online.

Overall, the instructor had a positive view of her early literacy experiences, especially of her nurturing home environment. She viewed her role as a teacher of reading as a lifelong pursuit as well as exciting and a huge honour and privilege. In teaching students, she favoured a balanced approach that addressed all strands (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and representing). Next, I discuss how the instructor designed the course.

Instructor’s Design of the Reading Processes Course: Goals, Structure, and Textbook

This section includes a description of the design of the reading processes course, specifically the instructor’s goals, the course structure, and textbook. Subsequently, the instructor’s teaching approaches and pedagogical values are described.

The goals for the course were to: (1) “discover that oral language is truly the biggest foundation for reading, if you can’t speak well you’re not going to read well, if you have an impoverished vocabulary you’re already approaching the game at a deficit”; (2) “realize the commitment they have to the subject”; (3) “distinguish what it is like in kindergarten to grade 2 when you are learning to read, and what happens in grades 3, 4, 5 and onwards, [when] you’re reading to learn”; (4) “understand all the components (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing) and not to fall into a trap of maybe teaching to one strategy more than others; I want to equip them in a number of ways to really invite kids in an appealing way to being engaged.” These goals articulated in the interview are consistent with what is written in the course syllabus.

The instructor thought of her post-degree professional program (PDPP) students as “incredibly passionate smart people” who brought a range of life experiences and education to the class. She saw her students not as empty vessels regarding their understanding of how to teach reading because “from their own... 16 years of schooling, they are probably experts on what works and what doesn’t work and a lot of them are parents so have witnessed things that do and do not work.”

Establishing a connection between teacher and students was at the core of the instructor’s beliefs. She expressed the idea that “often with older students we don’t have personal connections, and (she was) willing to make that time and commitment to get to know them.” She believed that “most memorable learning situations for individuals are dependent on their teacher.” As an instructor, her biggest hope was that, “(she) (could) give them something to take away that you know maybe in two years they’ll be like, oh that woman said such and such and I see this happening for my kids.”

There was no focus listed for each class. Instead, the instructor used the textbook to guide classroom content, requiring students to read full chapters, or parts of chapters, for every lesson throughout the course. The required textbook was titled *Classrooms that Work – They Can all Read and Write* (2016). This is a highly respected textbook by educators and is used widely in teacher preparation programs, specifically in reading courses. Overall, the messages and best practices advocated in the course textbook are based on a socio-constructivist approach to teaching and learning. The authors, Cunningham and Allington, called for a balanced, comprehensive approach to literacy instruction “that included authentic reading and writing, along with explicit instruction in the skills that would enable children to successfully engage in reading and writing” (p. vii).

Instructor’s Teaching Approaches, Sample Lessons, and Pedagogical Values

The instructor highlighted the main teaching approaches that she used, and which she perceived were well-received by students: think-alouds, examples of actual student work collected over her many years teaching elementary school, and inviting guest speakers that are “experts in their field.” Overall, she liked to engage students in “some listening, some doing, some viewing, so that (she kept) their attention”. During the two classroom observations, students were often asked to discuss their thinking with a partner, in a group or as a whole class. As for assessment requirements, she favoured a practical application of the theory. She stated, “I want to make it real life, I don’t want them leaving here (the course) thinking I know a lot about this but what does it look like inside a classroom?” For example, the instructor believed that her students might not start her course with a good repertoire of children’s literature for varied age groups. As a result, she designed an assignment that asked students to explore books that they could use as a springboard to teaching, so that they could “arrive on practicum with some treasure to give to the kids.” Another assignment asked students to “pull together a unit” to

engage kids in a reading workshop format, like a novel or genre study. In these assigned tasks, the instructor also valued allowing her students some choice so “they can find a pathway of what they’re passionate about.” Her final assignment required students, in groups, to explore important elements to organize a classroom that promoted reading, such as literature circles, the use of newspapers or technology devices for teaching, retelling, and so on. She also provided many formative opportunities to interact with the material discussed in class and to check for understanding. Throughout the course she asked students to also complete informal reflections, keep track of questions and insights at the back of their notebooks, and invited them to share those regularly in class.

The two classroom observations enabled me to see the actual milieu in which participants were developing their own understanding about teaching reading. During both observations, the class started with students collecting a thick pile of papers. The resources were intended to support the class’s content and students’ future teaching. At the beginning of the first class (second class of the course), I observed the instructor debrief on a write-up she had asked them to complete on their feelings towards the reading of a memorable childhood book. She shared a few students’ reflections, along with her connections to their experiences and book choices. This was the only activity that I observed that sought to elicit PSTs’ feelings and attitudes towards reading. Overall, the class was very interactive, with frequent pauses to allow students to discuss and share their thinking. I observed the instructor using what I term as an “immersive style”, in which she modeled how she had conducted the teaching with her elementary students by having PSTs ‘go through’ the steps of the lesson as students. At each step, she provided them with the rationale for the choice of instructional strategies, to convey to students that instructional choices

need to be informed by best practices. Below, to illustrate the learning context, I present a description of the format I observed during my observations.

The instructor introduced a reading task she had used with her middle grade students to “pique their interest about a topic.” In this case, the topic was “Reptiles.” I am including her rationale for instructional choices in brackets. She started by asking PSTs to write any words they knew about snakes (“to activate prior knowledge about the topic”). The instructor made links to how she would modify the lesson for younger students - she would give more time for this brainstorming activity. Then she asked the students to turn to a partner and share their words (“you can expand your knowledge by listening to others’ words” - called it a “Wordstorm” to expand vocabulary). After, she invited students to share some of the “juicy” words and wrote them on a sticky note and modeled how she would use these to start a “reptile word bank”. Then, the instructor asked students to come up with two questions they were curious about (“to give a purpose and motivation to do reading on the topic” and “find answers to their questions”). She shared her question and invited students to read their own aloud. Following this, the instructor gave students a text to read about snakes. It had short text, images, and a diagram (“some students who struggle with reading benefit from information being presented in different formats”). She asked students to share with a partner something they had learned from reading the text (“many teachers make the mistake of going straight from reading to writing” and “boys especially need time to talk about what they read to make sense of it”). Following the sharing, she modeled how she would say to the students: “You have a choice; I want you to determine how you are going to show me what you have learned” (write a sentence, sketch, poem, diagram; “you know that girls write poems better than boys, research is very clear on that”); then “make notes on what you want to say you learned”. Later, she had students share the formats they had

used to write things down (so they could “see the variety of ways for showing learning”). To conclude, the instructor reviewed the activity: “did something before the reading to elicit interest on the topic and vocabulary”; “during the reading we did ‘I wonder’ questions”; “after reading we did talking and possibly made T-S, T-T, T-W connections... the whole reading process was embodied in this activity”. She highlighted the versatility of the activity by saying that a colleague had used the activity successfully with grade 12 students. She mentioned how giving chunks of text on a topic to students who were struggling and got overwhelmed with lots of text was very useful.

The instructor used the “I model – You experience it - You try it” approach for most tasks. When modeling expectations for an assignment that required students to choose a book and a set of accompanying activities to use in their practicum, she said, “Your book selection will be a gem, a treasure,” as “books can be springboards into more exciting places.” The instructor read a book she loved, shared how she had used the book, with which grades, and modeled doing a book walk. Then she shared all the activities she had used to ensure that all of her elementary students could read the book, such as providing a copy of the lyrics to the song that came with the book, and giving many opportunities for kids to sing the song. She said that by the time she gave the book to her students “they could all read it”. Lastly, she had asked her young students to read the book to a buddy (“it helps to build strength and confidence as a reader”). After the modeling, the instructor pointed to a table that had an assortment of picture books and asked students, in groups, to select a book and then report on the name of the book, its main message and some ideas of how it could be used in the classroom.

In the interview, the instructor indicated that she often told students: “I don’t believe in life there are absolutes, we often get into trouble if there are absolutes. All children have

different needs, that's what teachers struggle with, finding the thing that really matters." She also shared with students that, "as a teacher there are things you will abandon, as you learn more you'll move away from some practices and to others, I try not to judge them so if a (misguided) comment comes up I just want a connection so they can tell me more." She clarified, "it's not that I want them all to have the same compelling belief I have, but I think they can see the richness and understanding in it (my belief)."

During my two classroom observations, the instructor repeatedly communicated her enthusiasm and admiration for the textbook. At one time she said, "I am passionate about literacy" and "I love this resource." In my first observation, the instructor conducted a debriefing on chapters 1 and 2. After allowing some time for students to discuss the readings with a partner, the instructor read her notes on what she considered to be the most important messages: "a balanced program is like a multivitamin"; "teacher is the most influential factor... the architect of the students' program"; "reading is complex so you have to have a comprehension and fluency focus"; "you need to do assessment three times a year to monitor progress of students"; "teacher read-alouds never stop, we all enjoyed and still enjoy them"; "need to consider gender issues and the importance of male reading models in boys"; "you need a balance of genres as most readers establish their preferences in the preteen years." To conclude the debrief, she stated:

I hope you don't sell this book because it is a wonderful resource to your teaching; I've been around since 1970 and the whole research of reading and this book for me sums up a lot of the best stuff out there.... the book is very current, very ethical, really good practices that you could refer to for the next five years and it won't be dated."

Regarding approaches to teach early reading, the instructor shared that when she started teaching in the 70s, the phonetic approach was the only approach used to teach reading. As a result, there were kids who could read slowly by sounding out, but teachers noticed that although they were

great decoders they were not good “comprehenders”. She indicated that “now we know fluency is crucial, how fluent a reader you are impacts your comprehension.” The instructor continued, “reading is a lot more than getting words right – phonics is a valuable tool, but not the only tool... you need to create a program that is balanced or you do kids a disservice.” She referenced Howard Gardner to indicate that “students have different learning styles” and that we needed to find out the learning styles in our classrooms; while we “help kids play to their strengths, you need to have a balance.” She stated, “The English language is not easy, with lots of exceptions, so equipping kids with just phonics is not adequate.” To conclude, the instructor directed students to the three cueing systems (Meaning, Syntax, and Visual) handout she had given them at the beginning of class saying, “This is what students need to make sense of text, the balance I talked about.” Then she called their attention to the list of self-monitoring strategies, saying, “This is what is constantly happening as we read.”

Novel study was a frequent way that PSTs were asked to plan and teach in their practicum. The instructor wanted “the students to feel prepared for practicum” so she shared her views on novel studies and how to do them. Mentioning the textbook, the instructor said, “Allington says you shouldn’t give kids book reports and I so agree with him; I don’t mean never; but you need to find other ways for students to show what they know about a book.” Regarding different ways to choose a novel, the instructor recommended novice teachers to do one book for the whole class, because it was easier to manage. Then, she encouraged students to note their response to the book and share those with their students (“it will translate to the students and promote engagement”). The instructor said she did not “like ready-made templates” and planned novel study units “with strong cross curricular links”. She highlighted the importance of “providing a hook, a pre-activity to engage students” and of “planning what to do

during the reading, the small things students could do after the reading that could culminate into a big project.” To support struggling readers, she suggested grouping “reluctant and strong readers together” because “a class is a community of learners and they should help each other.” She cautioned not to use this strategy too often as it “displeases some parents.” She also highlighted some strategies that would support second language learners during novel study, such as recording yourself while reading aloud to the class, using visuals, and class discussions. She articulated that it “was very important to keep in mind how to assess students when planning a novel study.”

Throughout her presentation, and during both class observations, the instructor stressed the value of “engaging students,” of “finding books and things that you (PSTs) are passionate about,” and of “modelling love for reading.” She said, “Teachers’ enthusiasm is contagious!” During the interview and throughout the two classroom observations, she consistently conveyed joy, excitement, and passion for books and reading.

In the section above, I presented an overview of the reading processes course in which preservice teachers learned how to teach reading. The overview started with biographical information on the instructor’s experiences both as a reader and as a teacher of reading, followed by a detailed description of the design of the reading processes course, and of the instructor’s teaching approaches and pedagogical values. My aim for including both biographical information and the description of the course was to provide a sense of the person and the context facilitating PSTs’ understanding. In Table 4.6, I provide a summary of relevant information included in the above description of the reading processes course; namely, the course goals, teaching approaches, and main pedagogical values.

Table 4.6

Reading Processes Course: Goals, Teaching Approaches and Pedagogical Values

Course goals and example quotes	Teaching approaches and example quotes	Pedagogical values and example quotes
Discover that oral language is the foundation of reading	Numerous paper handouts	Teacher is the most important factor in student learning <i>“teacher is the most influential factor... the architect of the students’ program”</i> ; <i>“most memorable learning situations for individuals are dependent on their teacher”</i>
To distinguish instruction in learning to read (K-2) and reading to learn (3-5)	Think-alouds to clarify rationale for teaching	Teaching is a lifelong pursuit <i>“continuously try to know more so that you can be a better teacher”</i> ; <i>“will not have all the answers at the end of the course”</i>
Understand balance of all strands of language arts (reading, viewing, writing, listening, speaking)	Samples of <i>“actual”</i> student work	Model passion, joy and love for reading <i>“teaching reading is exciting and a huge honour and privilege”</i> ; value of <i>“engaging students”</i> , of <i>“finding books and things that you (PSTs) are passionate about”</i> , and of <i>“modelling love for reading”</i> ; <i>“Teachers enthusiasm is contagious!”</i>
<i>“Equip students in a number of ways to really invite kids in an appealing way to being engaged”</i>	Gradual release of responsibility model	Be creative and make learning fun Sara said: <i>“The instructor was adamant that everything in the classroom needs to be fun, exciting and engaging”</i> ; Gillian commented on the instructor: <i>“The number one strategy that she advocates for is ‘fun’”</i>
Help <i>“students realize their commitment to the subject”</i>	Use guest speakers who are <i>“experts in their field”</i>	Use a balanced approach <i>“I don’t believe in life there are absolutes, we often get into trouble if there are absolutes. All children have different needs, that’s what teachers struggle with, finding the thing that really matters”</i> ; <i>“a</i>

<p>Prepare students for practicum and beyond <i>“arrive on practicum with some treasure to give to the kids”;</i> <i>“want the students to feel prepared for practicum”</i></p>	<p>Engage students in <i>“some listening, some doing, some viewing”</i></p>	<p><i>balanced program is like a multivitamin”</i></p> <p>Use common sense <i>“as a teacher there are things you will abandon, as you learn more you’ll move away from some practices and to others”</i></p>
<p>Establish connection with students <i>“often with older students we don’t have personal connections, and I’m willing to make that time and commitment to get to know them”</i></p>	<p>Peer, group, and whole class discussions</p>	<p>Book levels limit children <i>“I believe in children guiding their own learning”</i></p>
<p>Have an impact on students <i>“give them something to take away that you know maybe in two years they’ll be like, oh that woman said such and such and I see this happening for my kids, I just hope they’ll have some connections to take away”</i></p>	<p>Assignments designed as practical application of the theory <i>“make it real life, I don’t want them leaving here (the course) thinking I know a lot about this but what does it look like inside a classroom?”</i></p>	<p>Teach oral language explicitly <i>“oral language is truly the biggest foundation for reading”; “if you have an impoverished vocabulary you’re already approaching the game at a deficit”</i></p>
	<p>Model activities that have <i>“real life”</i> application</p>	<p>Plan units with cross-curricular links. Sara said about the instructor: <i>“need to provide an opportunity to express views on text in multiple ways through cross-curricular links”</i>, (e.g., students to role play, perform parts of a story they are reading)</p>
	<p>Formative opportunities with detailed feedback prior to final submission of work</p>	<p>Consider gender differences in teaching <i>“boys especially need time to talk about what they read to make sense of it”;</i> <i>“girls write poems better than boys, research is very clear on that”</i></p>
	<p>Allow some degree of student choice so <i>“they can find a pathway of what they’re passionate about”</i></p>	<p>Importance of book selection <i>“Your book selection will be a gem, a treasure”;</i> <i>“books can be springboards into more exciting places”</i></p>

Use of students' written work to <i>"gauge their thinking"</i>	Reading is complex <i>"you have to have a comprehension and fluency focus"</i>
Textbook readings to support lesson topics <i>"I've been around since 1970 and the whole research of reading and this book for me sums up a lot of the best stuff out there.... the book is very current, very ethical, really good practices that you could refer to for the next five years and it won't be dated"</i>	Phonics is a valuable tool but not the only tool <i>"reading is a lot more than getting words right you need to create a program that is balanced or you do kids a disservice"; "The English language is not easy with lots of exceptions, so equipping kids with just phonics is not adequate"</i>
Model joy, passion, excitement	

The above table provided a summary of the instructor's goals for the course and the main messages and approaches that PSTs were exposed to in their preparation to become teachers of reading. In the next section, I present a description of the individual case studies.

Individual Case Studies

This section offers a detailed description of the ways in which preservice teachers developed their understanding of how to teach reading in primary classrooms. The data set for this section consisted of three interviews with each participant, and two reflective writings from each of them. The analysis of the data revealed a common set of categories organized around three main sections designed to reflect the "before and after" in the participants' journey in learning about teaching reading: before and after the reading course; and finally, after their practicum placement. Each case study begins with an overview of the participants' early literacy experiences, including memories of home and school, and of their understanding of how reading is taught. Then, findings are described from preservice teachers' experiences while learning about the teaching of reading through their participation in the reading processes course. The

description depicts the participants' perspectives on the course messages about teaching reading, and a description of participants' evolving understanding as a result of their participation in the course; that is, what beliefs were confirmed and/or changed, and what were some areas of cognitive tension they experienced. Lastly, each case study provides an overview of the three preservice teachers' experience in learning to teach reading through practicum and the resulting understanding of how reading is taught. The overview includes a description of the practicum placement, how participants taught reading, the influences on their planning and teaching, perception of how the reading processes course prepared them for practicum, and the influence of practicum on their evolving understanding about the teaching of reading. To conclude, participants articulate their evolved understanding of reading pedagogy.

Sara

Sara was 26 years old and had a prior undergraduate degree in history. She had no previous experience teaching or working with children except for a brief job as a nanny to a four-year old. Although she had difficulty remembering how she learned to read, she knew she was a precocious reader. She fondly recalled a nurturing home literacy environment. Despite positive experiences in her schooling and feeling successful, Sara especially disliked being asked to read aloud in class and the "forced" reading requirements of school. Sara still loved to read and felt very positively about becoming a teacher of reading. The next section includes Sara's full biographical narrative of early literacy experiences at home and at school. The biographical narrative is followed by a description of how Sara envisions herself as a teacher of reading.

Early literacy experiences: Memories of home and school.

Sara cannot remember how she learned to read. She recalled that "she could pick up a book and read it in kindergarten" and that she was "reading chapter books by the time (she) was six or

seven years old”. Sara loved reading and identified as a “bookworm;” “I loved reading so much that it would be hard for my mom to take books away from me and get me to go to sleep, because I just wanted to read every single book in my room,” she said. She thought that because her mom was an avid reader, and her dad was not, that it was her mom who taught her to read. She remembered regular trips to the library when she was “three and four years old (...) going to reading time circles and things like that.” She could recall favourite books from that time, such as “Berenstain Bears and anything by Robert Munsch, Dr. Seuss, (...) [and] Roald Dahl.” She said, “Reading was always a big thing in our household.”

When recalling school experiences with reading, Sara found it curious that she could think of “concrete spelling lessons and writing lessons that (she) did in... like grade 1, 2, 3... like learning how to write in cursive and learning all of (her) letters and sounds and things like that but reading... can't think of anything.” As a result, she believed that learning to write and spell did not come as easily as learning to read. She said:

... writing and spelling weren't things that were...I mean they were encouraged at home, but they were things that I don't think my mum felt comfortable focusing on at home. Whereas reading was something that we could do together, um, and it was always highly encouraged and it was sort of every single night before bed, like that was my quiet time.

Sara remembered doing many whole-class reading activities in grades 2-3, such as reading texts from an overhead projector, answering comprehension and vocabulary questions, or summarizing articles. She also recalled being read to by the teacher and librarian, round robin reading, silent reading, novel studies, and reading buddies. Sara strongly disliked being asked to read aloud in class without warning, describing her “heartbeat going crazy and just feeling like (she) was going to cry in front of the whole class.” She admitted to lacking confidence: “I can read it in my head but to say it out loud.” Sara had very positive memories of the librarian from her elementary school. She described great excitement from having been taught about the Dewey

Decimal System, which gave her the independence to “find and check out books” all by herself.

She also indicated that listening to the librarian read was one of her favourite memories from school:

I always remember just wanting to read like she did, out of the corner of her eye... so I would go home and sat my stuffed animals up on my bed and I would try to read the books the way she read them... watching her made me want to read more because it was this skill she had that I just admired so much.

Throughout her schooling, Sara acknowledged having a “comply/defy” relationship with “forced (assigned)” reading. She recalled the “painful experience” of reading books that she could read but not comprehend. She remarked, “It was of no interest to me and what we were meant to grasp from it, it would just never stick because it just seemed so out of context of my ability to apply this to something else.” Sara liked to read books that allowed her to “form a concrete real life connection.” She stated:

I always read for personal interest and personal satisfaction, so being forced to read in class something that I wasn't necessarily interested in, it's always been a bit of a struggle. I loved silent reading time because we could read the books we wanted and it felt like an escape for me.

Sara believed that “at that age (high school) so many students start to veer away from reading because much of what is assigned to us just seems like really monotonous and unimportant.”

On the other hand, in grades 11-12, she “loved novel studies” because she was given the opportunity to choose the book and the teacher encouraged independence. Sara commented:

She encouraged us to figure out what we liked to read and what it was about those texts that drew us to them. She just kind of let us explore reading in our own means [and she brought reading to] who you are and who you are as a reader and how your interest affects what you're going to read.

Currently, Sara wished that she could read for pleasure as much as she used to; instead, in the evenings, she often found herself “on her phone reading online posts from blogs and news-

type forum websites” which made her feel “really guilty.” While she felt that online publications were “such an amazing educational tool,” Sara was also very frustrated at having to sift through the large amount of “biased, untrue posts lacking application of critical thought.” While she conceded that reading e-books was more “environmentally friendly,” she loved “all things about a physical book, holding a book, the smell of old books.” She said, “I buy most books second-hand just so I can smell the paper and how it turns yellow... Going out to buy a book is a nice, tangible treat to yourself.”

Overall, Sara’s memories of her early literacy experiences indicate a nurturing home environment that influenced her love of reading. In school she had a comply/defy relationship with school reading requirements. She strongly valued choice and relevance as positive elements in her school experience.

Envisioning herself as a teacher of early reading.

In the first interview before the reading course, Sara was asked to imagine how she was going to teach reading: how children learn to read, what approaches she was going to use, how she envisioned her classroom and her students. She indicated not knowing how children learned to read. She supposed it was because she “can’t remember how (she) learned to read” and “never helped someone learn to read.” She believed that it all started with being able to “understand letters and combination of letters and the sounds.” “Being able to read something and sound it out in your head, I think that’s really important in reading... because we do the silent auditory reading back to ourselves,” she said. Sara believed that reading was an “individual learning process.” She also thought that students needed to see the writing-reading connection since they had to read what was written on paper. She believed that “at a kindergarten-grade one level so much of it (instruction) would be reading out loud to students and then having them maybe

reading out loud the same text.” In recalling a prior experience reading with a very young child, Sara questioned if the “memorization stage of reading is useful” or if it’s just successful mimicking:

While I was nannying a few summers ago, I would read the same handful of favourite books to a four-year old each afternoon before she had a nap. I remember thinking to myself – wow, she can read – as she repeated the pages back to me while we flipped through the books. I slowly recognized that she wasn’t actually reading the words but that she had memorized her favourite books. I think that this is actually one of the first stages in learning how to read, becoming familiar with a favourite text.

Sara expressed a lack of confidence in being able to pay attention to all students when “each student requires individual learning time.” She was aware that students would be at different stages in their reading development, that she would have to assess each student, and that teaching reading would “take a lot of teacher-student time.” Finding out students’ reading levels and how they compared to each other was important for her, as was having appropriate texts for the different levels in the classroom. As a result, it was essential for students to have access to books that were “interesting,” “relevant,” and that would “excite” them in the classroom, regardless if they had access to them (books) outside of school. She wanted her students’ experiences with reading in her class to be positive, so she “will have to think of ways to make reading as exciting and fun as it possibly can be.” Having constant encouragement is the only way that a student will want to improve. Sara wanted to create a “classroom environment that allows for different types of readers to feel comfortable” by ensuring that they all “feel confident in their own ability to read whatever that ability is.” Overall, Sara felt that “teaching reading is a bag of mixed emotions, of excitement and frustration.” She hoped her students “get as excited as (she) was about reading” and “go beyond (her) expectations of what they are able to read.” On the other hand, she felt anxious about the possibility that she might turn students away from reading, to actually feel “disdain,” regardless of the fact that they can read. Sara was eager to be

participating in a reading course because she was “not confident in how learning to read happens.” When envisioning her future students, she believed them to be very different than she was, especially in their “awareness of how to use technology, how to get information from the Internet.” As a result, and unlike her, those students “feel less excited about reading” and were not reading for “enjoyment.” Instead, she believed that they were mostly “reading for social connection, like Facebook... and means to an end, rather than engaging with the content.” She acknowledged that her “pessimistic” view was due to the “general shift that (she felt) has happened in younger generations towards media-themed stimuli.” Students were “less hands-on with physical books” and “TV, phones, video and computer games are the things that seem to sort of be in place of reading,” she said, “the way I think of reading. They might be engaging with texts all day long but are they really reading?” Sara wanted to provide her students with many experiences with “real books.” She said, “We do so much reading from a computer screen, and so much swiping on our phones that I don’t want something like reading a novel to turn into another form of that online.”

Sara’s understanding of how children learn to read was based on some of the activities she remembered doing at home and at school. In envisioning herself as a teacher of reading, Sara’s goals and choices in instructional approaches showed an influence of what she enjoyed as a student, such as providing choice and relevant learning opportunities for her students. An important goal was to motivate students to enjoy reading as much as she did.

Next, I describe Sara’s interpretation of her participation in the reading processes course and how coursework contributed to her evolving understanding of early reading pedagogy.

Learning about teaching reading through the reading processes coursework.

Sara felt that her experiences in the course were positive. The course was structured as “teaching to read at the most primary and then sort of fostering a want to keep reading at older levels.” She felt that the process of going from “not being able to read to being an eager reader” was a difficult concept to grasp, which she supposed was because she had “such vague memories of learning how to read.” She identified “learning what the first steps in learning to read look like” as the most significant aspect of the course. “That’s what I like.... I want to focus on primary grades.” Those first classes gave her:

a better understanding of what a young reader looks like, how they interact with text, and that seems to be more really to sort of just memorization and being able to visualize words and also creating a certain amount of confidence around reading. Um that was something we talked about a lot at the beginning of the course, those first processes that are sort of almost like fake reading but it is a step in the right direction.

Sara felt the course textbook was “a good complement to what was taught in class” and did most of the assigned readings. With few exceptions, she found the activities suggested in the textbook to be “realistic,” “tested and true,” “built around foundational reading skills,” and she would use “a lot of what they recommend.” Another positive aspect was how much Sara got from the instructor’s “personal touch on activities.” She said, “Her (instructor) face lights up when she’s talking about reading and literacy; just seeing her getting excited made me excited about teaching reading too... totally contagious. If you’re in a class with a teacher who doesn’t feel that way about books will be harder for you to enjoy the class and enjoy teaching reading.” Some highlights of the content addressed in class were literature circles, poetry cafes, and pre-reading activities to get students excited about a topic. About these, she said,

She’ll (instructor) kind of give out these little zip-lock bags of vocabulary words that are key words within the texts, and then, in small groups, you basically get to create your own story with those words and then having the book introduced to you after.... I think it’s like a really interactive way, you’re engaging someone’s prior knowledge by...Like a lot of these words might be familiar to only some students.

Liking the idea of having options for a novel study, such as doing it in a literature circle format,

Sara said:

...allowing like once a week for students to break up into their groups, based on the novel that that group is reading. And having sort of like little book club meetings. And just being able to talk about like their likes and dislikes about the texts, or giving each group like a task that they have to complete every single week. Um, I think that it's really important for students to be able to talk with peers about what they're reading.

Sara also appreciated that some assignments allowed her to delve deeper into some teaching areas in collaboration with classmates. For example, her group did a unit on using newspapers in the classroom. She said:

At first I thought that this was only appropriate for older students but now I can see that some can be done in grade 2 in terms of just exposing them to new vocabulary words... of things like, scavenger hunts of newspapers or, um, having like, uh, unusual word wall in the room and each week letting students like flip through one page of a newspaper and cutting out all of the words that are new to them or that they just don't know, and pasting it on, like, a word wall. Just exposing them to, like, a variety of texts in terms of non-fiction and social media or news media.

Sara indicated that she enjoyed the instructor's use of the following strategies: emphasis on "peer-to-peer teaching," "collaboration," "less lecture," "more discussion," and "more doing" to facilitate learning in the course.

The main message about teaching reading was to make it fun. Sara said, "The instructor was adamant that everything in the classroom needs to be fun, exciting and engaging and I agree.... if I show excitement about reading, then students will feel it and be excited too." Sara indicated that the instructor's teaching style was very open and discussion-based but that, at the same time, emphasized "doing what feels comfortable to you." The instructor also highlighted the importance of reading aloud to students and to accept the range of skills in reading and writing of young learners while still encouraging new skills and strategies, and as a teacher, you also needed to provide many opportunities for young learners to practice their skills. Sara

expressed that her instructor also placed an emphasis on offering a choice of texts for students; texts that were suitable for their skill level, reading abilities, and relevant and interesting to them. She suggested that texts for older students have many cross-curricular links (e.g., social justice, art).

Evolving understanding about teaching early reading after the reading processes course. Sara felt that “it was important for (her) to know that students of all ages should have reading modeled for them; that learning to read doesn’t stop in the primary grades and even continues well into high school.” She understood that memorization, visualization of words and texts, and vocabulary work, were building blocks in teaching students to read. She stated, “I already knew that but had not realized they were steps in learning to read.” “I learned the importance of letter sense, much like number sense in learning mathematics,” she said; the importance of knowing letters before words, of starting with the alphabet, of sounding letters out and visualizing them on paper. Sara also liked the idea of leveled reading but felt “a lot of responsibility” to find the right texts. She agreed that she needed to “make sure that the students are reading texts that are right for their ability” in order to “foster their self-confidence” and “can understand what they are reading.” Overall, she felt “the course just skimmed the surface of teaching reading skills. Some misconceptions were corrected and I gained a lot of new ideas—for example, strategies such as skip reading were new to me—but I still feel as though I have so much to learn in teaching reading skills.” Sara mentioned that there were aspects in her coursework that had confirmed and/or changed her prior understanding. She also indicated areas that caused cognitive tension in her beliefs about teaching reading.

The course reinforced for Sara the importance of repeated readings of the same books as a way to build confidence in reading and develop fluency. She said, “I remember doing that

when I was learning to read; I thought I was just memorizing.” Also, “the importance of young readers hearing reading being modeled in the classroom was reiterated to (her).” Another aspect she connected with was around the idea of “reading text that is right for your reading level.” She referred to her own experience: “I remember when I was in school the only time where I quickly shut down was when I was given texts that were too hard for me.” She felt “frustrated” and “didn’t enjoy reading” because she wouldn’t “take in as much information as (she) would have if the text was appropriate for (her) level of reading.” Admittedly, she conceded, “it’s important to read a bit outside of your comfort zone, that’s how you become exposed to new vocabulary.”

Sara indicated that the nature of some of the “things she disagreed” with in the course were of a personal level. She said:

When I think about teaching reading I worry about using really outdated leveled readers... we have to be conscious of what we are placing in front of young readers, it has to have content that we agree with and that they can relate to.... and older leveled readers are perpetuating classic gender role stereotypes.

Sara appreciated the instructor bringing a “huge quantity and variety of resources to class.”

However, she felt that some of the activities that the instructor shared to help students with their language skills especially in kindergarten and grade 1 classrooms, “may promote gender stereotyping” (e.g., dress up box, all little girls were dressing in nurse or secretarial outfits). Sara said, “This did not ‘jive’ with me, at all” and she felt strongly about the need to be mindful of what you are “teaching beyond language skills.” Another area in which Sara felt some tension was around the message that students needed “opportunity to express views on text in multiple ways through cross-curricular links”, (e.g., students to role play, perform parts of a story they are reading). She self-identified as shy and indicated that modeling these activities for students was “outside of (her) comfort zone.” She said, “Bringing in drama to reading or language arts class is really scary for me.” However, Sara saw a benefit to feeling these tensions saying, “I feel like a

secure reader and I'm confident in my reading capabilities. But then it just kind of highlights the sort of the areas of teaching, I think will be a little bit of a struggle for me.” While Sara felt better equipped with a “stronger understanding of the graduated steps of learning a lifelong skill like reading,” she admitted: “I still feel like I don't know how to teach reading.” She strongly still believed that “so much of reading has to do with the person learning and not the person teaching” in that “a lot of learning to read is impacted by the attitude and confidence of the person learning to read.” Sara indicated that in order to feel more confident she needed “experience with readers who are sort of in between the stage of being able to maybe like read something that's at their level fluently by themselves and still sort of like working through those stages.” She added, “I think that that's when, kind of, the lights will start to turn on and I'll be able to see, oh, this is that stage and these are all of the things that we can be doing at that stage.”

Sara indicated that she now understood the value in young children pretending to read books because they had memorized them. She now viewed memorization as a pre-reading skill and that it was “a necessary step of learning to read.” Overall, she did not feel that there was anything “transformational” in her thinking after participation in the reading processes course. She admitted, “I don't think it changed my prior beliefs because I had very few.” Sara felt that most of what she learned was in addition to what she already thought. She remarked, “I don't remember how I learned to read but when listening to some concepts [in class] it jogged memories of doing it at school or at home with mom.”

To conclude, after participation in the reading processes course, Sara continued to believe that learning to read should start with learning the letters and corresponding sounds and that student learning was more dependent on the student than the teacher. While she admitted to not having had many beliefs about teaching reading prior to the course because she could not

remember how she learned to read, she thought that the course had confirmed and expanded on her initial understandings. Through participation in the course, Sara developed an awareness that learning to read is a very complex process.

Next, I illustrate Sara's perspectives on her practicum. I include her description of the practicum placement and experience teaching reading. Sara also shared her views on influences on her planning and teaching and on how well the reading processes coursework prepared her for practicum.

Learning about teaching reading through practicum.

Sara did her placement in a grade 2 classroom of 23 students. Almost half of those students were English Language Learners (ELL) and received daily support outside of the classroom. Sara said "they had no trouble carrying on conversation just a few months behind the others in reading and writing but not struggling." There was also a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Sara thought she had a "really great mentor (supervising teacher)" but was surprised that he did not read aloud to his students. "It's something he doesn't feel personally comfortable with." She said,

But I'm such a believer in reading aloud to students, like regardless of how old they are that I was really bummed out when I found out about that because I had been spending so much time gathering so many books that I wanted to share with these kids. And I ended up just bringing them in anyways and putting them on the back table because I found that the class library was quite small. Most of the kids had gone through every single book in it already.

Sara noticed two main routines for teaching reading. The first was a daily silent reading time after lunch that she felt was a "struggle" because students were not spending time reading as they could not find a book they wanted to read. She thought it was because "everything was available for them to pick off the shelves all the time" and there was not enough choice. She felt this was a good learning opportunity for her:

... that was like a huge thing for me, noticing that these kids need something new and fresh like at least every week or once every two weeks. So even if you have a really, really small class library, maybe start by only putting out 15 of those books. And then, you know, like just rotating through them or something.

She thought that there was not a focus on reading over other subjects because the “mentor teacher and (her university) supervisor said that for grade 2, the class was excelling in reading.... Um, and that's saying a lot considering 10 of them were ELL.” The second “nice morning routine” involved the class working out of a daily edit book. In a “round-robin style, they would read the paragraph aloud and work through it.” She was really surprised that the students seemed to actually like it because when she first heard about it she thought, “Oh, my gosh, this seems so boring.” Sara also noticed the mentor teacher encouraging two struggling readers to “read aloud in front of the class, even though you could tell that they weren't very confident in themselves. And he would usually ask them to read something that he knew was at their level.” Even though Sara did not see explicit reading instruction, she felt that it must have taken place:

I noticed reading one on one with these two (struggling readers) that they had all of these strategies, but I had never seen them being taught, so it was obvious that they had been either established earlier in the room, or earlier in the year, or with a support teacher. They would jump over a word if they couldn't get it or they would replace it with a word that made sense in the sentence. And a lot of like sounding out, you know, one time really slowly. Second time a little quicker and then like they would get it on the third sound. So, like all of these strategies that (the university instructor) had told us about.

For her practicum, Sara was responsible for teaching Science, Math, and Poetry. She thought that poetry was going to be her “only chance to get them reading either on their own, or in partners.” However, for science, she “had to bring in a lot of written content” and, as result, students had to do “lots of reading” which she felt was positive. She recalled,

They read many A to Z readers, over and over again. And then we would talk about them. Um, just sort of to get like the main vocabulary out too for them to be able to, you know, say like, ‘I know what a prediction is’ and, ‘I know what a hypothesis is’. And, so I found

like the more that we read those things over and over again together, and talked about them out loud. It was a little bit easier for them.

For teaching poetry, Sara described bringing about 30 anthologies to the class and having them available to students throughout the unit. At the beginning of class, she would read a poem and every third or fourth day, students had to find a poem that they liked, find a partner, share the poem and read it aloud. She read the poem aloud to model “things like pausing at a period, or you know reading like you're really sad, or reading like you're really, really happy. Just things like that.” The culminating activity was a Poetry Café in which students had to use a green screen app on the iPad to display an image that suited the poem they wrote and recite the poem aloud to the class. Sara had a very positive moment during her practicum. For most of her teaching time, she had not been able to read aloud to students as it was not part of the class schedule. She was beginning to think that maybe "seven-year olds just don't want to be read to anymore." But, when she started her poetry unit, which took place in the last two weeks of the practicum, she decided she was going to read aloud a poem or rhyming book at the beginning of every class. The students loved it. She commented,

...reading a poem to them, and the next day them saying, ‘Read it again! Can you read that poem again?’ It was just so exciting for me because it wasn't even that they all loved the poem, it was the fact that like they really liked sitting on the floor with me, and we could all have this face-to-face conversation because we were so close together. They loved being read aloud to. So, it was nice once I figured it out that, ‘OK. I can fit this in somewhere.’

To help them practice reading, Sara had students do the reading. When I asked her how she promoted reading in the classroom, she answered,

I don't know. Did I? Because I just didn't feel like I ever had the chance to teach reading in the classroom. The only time that I ever saw the strategies and the applications that we talked about in our reading course, was when I read one on one with students and could see that they had learned these strategies at a certain point.

In the second interview, Sara was asked to reflect on the sources of influence on her planning and teaching during practicum. Sara expressed great admiration for the two literacy instructors in university. She said, “There were things in the way that they taught us that you could tell it was from the 35 years’ experience with very young people.” Their credibility as educators was a source of influence. Sara was especially inspired by being read to in class by both instructors. She recalled,

...listening to [the instructor] read a book aloud, like you could fall asleep listening to her. She's just so peaceful and so happy. And everything it just flows and sort of became the same thing. And the whole last two semesters listening to them, like, read aloud, everyone was just like, ‘I want to be able to read a book aloud like they can.’

Sara’s own experiences with reading aloud were limited to being a nanny to a four-year old a few years earlier. She felt that it was easy being enthusiastic and get into character when it was in a one on one situation. When imagining herself in front of a classroom she thought, “No way. There's no way I'd want to do that.” However, after seeing the way a room full of 25 to 55 year-olds (classmates) reacted to being read to by such an animated instructor, she changed her mind. “It's fun for everybody, and it's a point in a day where you get to lighten up,” she said. Sara was also influenced by the reading methods instructor’s emphasis on the need to find small daily opportunities for students to practice their reading skills. She recalled the instructor’s message,

No matter what subject it is that you're teaching, no matter what part of the day it is, there's always an opportunity to get students to read when you're reading and to model that behavior.... instead of me reading out the instructions for a hands-on activity that we're doing in math, getting the students to read them out to each other... small opportunities for them to practice... in a non-threatening way. It's not like you're doing a reading test on reading aloud. I'm just encouraging whatever type of reading that they're doing.... allowing them time to self-correct and also just encouraging them to read aloud, regardless.

Sara also indicated that the “biggest thing (she) walked away with” from the reading course was that “you can't motivate a student to read if you're not motivated to read.” Sara remarked, “Knowing that she (instructor) was always searching for the next wonderful book to share with us, that's something that I think is so important to model, especially for elementary educators.”

Sara acknowledged that while the literacy courses were the “strongest” courses and that she “gained a lot” from them, she did not feel that her university preparation prepared her well for practicum. She said, “In general, I felt really, really underprepared, just sort of like, ‘OK. This is your placement. Here you go. Bye. See you later.’ Kind of a boot out the door.” She strongly felt that there needed to be more “reading and literacy courses” especially with a stronger emphasis on the elementary level. She justified her thinking with the conversations she had with elementary teachers in her practicum school. In those conversations, teachers expressed feeling frustrated in their lack of success in motivating students to read and in supporting struggling readers. Sara observed,

They (teachers) just want them (students) to be able to read. I didn't feel like I had any new tools or anything that I had gained from the university that I could bring into a classroom. And that [my mentor teacher] would go, ‘Wow. Like that's really cool, and I'm going to use this classroom after you leave.’

When she started practicum, Sara thought to herself, “Well now the real learning is going to take place because now I'm only figuring out what this all looks like.” She had heard from other graduates of the teaching program that “practicum is when it all starts. Like when you really start learning.” Sara thought that it made sense for practicum to offer the “real learning” and as a result, thought that universities should place stronger requirements around PSTs volunteering in schools regularly from the beginning of their program. She argued that this was the only way for PSTs to:

... figure out whether or not these theories and these concepts that you're learning in your class time, whether or not they work and whether or not they work for you too. Because that's the other big thing: that what works for one person might not work for you, or might not work for the students that you're working with.

Influence of practicum on understanding of how to teach early reading. Sara's main area of struggle during practicum centered on classroom engagement and management. She said, "I wanted to be best friends with these kids. And I had a really hard time finding my voice. And I was like really polite with them and that only lasted for 12 days until they started walking all over me." Sara believed that the reason for her struggle was that she did not have models from teachers in her past to draw strategies from. She expressed,

I don't remember the teachers in elementary school who were good disciplinarians, because why would you remember it? Versus if someone did something that made you feel so terrible when you're 10 years old, you still remember it as an adult. So I just remembered all those, like, little things that teachers did, I thought, 'That was so terrible. Like, I'll never do that to a student.' But then there were moments in the practicum where I would catch myself halfway through doing one of these terrible things and think, 'Oh, my gosh.' This person has influenced me.

Sara described this situation about an especially low point during her practicum:

There was a little girl in the class. And it didn't matter what we were talking about in a group discussion, I couldn't get her to listen to whoever was talking. I wanted to have really calm conversations about what a good audience looks like, and that it's not just a matter of, like, respecting me. It's a matter of respecting everyone in the classroom.... it just went on for weeks and one day I just said, "[student], can you just repeat what she just said? I want you to repeat it all." And she just looked at me and like her face dropped. And she was like, "I can't repeat it," and my heart just like sank into my belly. And I thought, "Oh, my gosh. I had a teacher do that to me and I know that feeling that [student], has right now in her stomach. And I can't believe..."

During the debrief at the end of the day, her mentor teacher said to her, "You're going to reach a breaking point where sometimes it just happens and what happens is you do what you remember being done to you." From these experiences, Sara realized that she now had to find ways of dealing with challenges in a way that worked for who she is. Sara also expressed an

understanding that reading is so much more important than she used to think it was. “Not that reading and writing should be absolutely privileged in education” but “when you're working with students who are seven years old and they can name off the timetables in 15 seconds, but they have a really, really hard time reading one sentence aloud in front of your class, then that's how you realize, that it is so important,” she said. “I think that it's more of those, like, flunk-school skills that we all really, really need.”

Current beliefs about teaching early reading.

Sara felt that before the reading processes course she had no idea how to teach someone to read while now she had “a tiny bit of an idea.” She had more experience in what a young reader looked like, some successful strategies they could use, and how to teach them those strategies. Sara found it very encouraging to see that some of the strategies promoted in the reading processes course, were being used by students in her practicum classroom. As a result, she felt motivated to keep “learning about reading methods and teaching reading.” She admitted to still needing to find more ways to motivate students to practice reading. In her practicum, she noticed that “some of the readers who were struggling in the classroom was because they just weren't motivated whatsoever. And I didn't know how to motivate them.” She tried to take the students to the library as often as possible so that they would have more reading choices, but realized that this strategy was not enough. She also found that “the readers that were really, really strong readers, they were kids that read at home a lot.” On the contrary, struggling readers did not read much at home. Sara believed that parents needed to be involved in developing readers. She remarked, “Reading is not just something that you do for five hours of the day, and then you go home and like you don't have to look at books the rest of the day.” Sara felt that teaching reading was “very complex. Words are complex, and language is complex, and

understanding all of those things for the first time is a really big feat.” She observed that the support teachers in her practicum school “were so awesome with the kids” and that the students were truly excited to leave the classroom to go to the support room. Sara believed that the support teachers could develop such good relationships with the students “because they got to work with them like either one on one or in like groups of three or four.”

Overall, at the end of her practicum, Sara admitted to still having many gaps in her understanding of how reading should be taught. For instance, she believed that it would have been essential to have had a course on assessment practices prior to going into practicum. Even though it was not an expectation for this practicum that PSTs design assessment tools, Sara felt very insecure about the effectiveness of her teaching without knowing how to assess students’ literacy work. While she wanted more from her reading course, Sara also conceded that even the teachers in her practicum school who “have 15 and 20 years of experience, are still requesting that they have reading workshops.” She said, “It seems like that's something that you're always learning how to teach it.” Sara still felt really anxious about teaching students that she couldn’t connect with or get through to; the feeling of “I don't know how to explain this to you in more than the five ways I've already offered.”

Marsha

Marsha was 23 years old, with an undergraduate degree in English. She had no previous experience teaching or working with children. Marsha did not have vivid memories of learning to read, but remembered that it had been easy for her. She believed that she learned in the first years of school. Her home environment nurtured an early love of reading. Her parents supported her, and her slightly younger sister, daily with their schoolwork. She attended private schools from kindergarten to grade 12, had felt successful in school, and had strong positive memories of

school. Marsha still loved to read and felt very positive about becoming a teacher of reading. The next section includes Marsha's biographical narrative of early literacy experiences at home and at school, followed by a description of how Marsha envisions herself as a teacher of reading.

Early literacy experiences: Memories of home and school.

Marsha remembered "lots of reading" with her parents in the "evening after school." She recalled sitting beside them while they read to her and she followed along. She said, "They would kind of try to get me into it and get me to sound out especially the tough words too and then try to explain what these things meant if I didn't know a word and that sort of thing... and not give me a lot help, even though I would get frustrated sometimes." Marsha did not remember precisely how and when she learned to read, but she recalled that she did not have "too much trouble" learning. More vivid to her were memories associated with helping her sister who "had quite a bit of trouble with reading." Marsha would set up a "little classroom" at home to help her sister with homework. She remembered watching Sesame Street and getting her first computer when she was in grade 4, and playing on the Reader Rabbit software. Even though she felt that "a lot of (her) reading development was self-directed", she conceded that when she was young it was her parents who chose any books they bought for her. Even though she did not think that her parents were "pleasure" readers, she said, "they've always been very good at picking up on what I was interested in and following that vein and then exploring different veins." Her dad especially liked to "push the boundaries" of her areas of interest; sometimes she liked his suggestions, sometimes not.

While Marsha thought that she learned to read in grade 1, her first memory of reading on her own was at the end of grade 2, when she could read "little parts" of *Stuart Little*, the book the teacher had read aloud to the class. Her school experiences in learning to read mostly reinforced

the methods that her parents had used to teach her reading. She recalled “lots of letter forming and phonics worksheets” in kindergarten and being read picture books. She remembered time spent at school in the computer lab using programs like *Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?* and *Spelling Blizzard*. She also recalled spelling tests every Friday, which she believed to be a fundamental part of literacy. She “didn’t mind” the tests because her parents would “drill” her all week; “I didn’t like being drilled but I liked doing well on the tests,” she said. She remembered some classmates not doing well and “dreading Friday morning spelling tests.”

Marsha really disliked activities involving phonics and grammar. She said, “It was never taught in context, I didn’t get why I was doing it.... I found it super boring... I would want to get on to the novels or even poetry. Anything but grammar.” Marsha also recalled students being asked to read aloud in class very frequently, especially after the second grade and that most of the texts she had to read were accompanied by worksheets asking comprehension questions. As a result, she came to value comprehension above other analytical processes, higher order thinking or imagination. Her favourite activities concerning books were to read independently and to be read to by the librarian who “had a really great reading voice and was very good at character voices.” Marsha said,

I saw these enjoyable activities as separate from learning to read, which was not typically a fun activity. I made the assumption that learning to read was inherently a difficult activity that was just not very enjoyable. I assumed the enjoyment came when you were able to read on your own and the steepest part of the learning curve was behind you.

Marsha thought that it was “really cool” that in grade 10 the teacher gave her the option of selecting a few books from a list. She remarked, “I had never had that before.” Nevertheless, Marsha related to the difficulty for teachers to find a class book that every student liked. She said, “How are you possibly going to get something that everyone likes? It’s just impossible.” She appreciated when classrooms had a well-stocked library and enjoyed “feeling competent” in

being able to read the books that were recommended for her grade level “because you know that you’re up to reading that reading level where you should be.” Marsha had no memories of elementary teachers recommending books that she loved, but did remember enjoying some of the class-assigned selections. She recalled the first book she read multiple times, *Howl’s Moving Castle*, when she was in grade 6; it was a recommendation from a friend. Another exciting reading experience was reading the *Harry Potter* books. Marsha described her motivation to read the books in this way:

... to grow up with the characters in the series since a new one came out almost every year so I think (...) the ability to connect with the characters, and I liked to escape like I would read all day sometimes, I would sit in my bean bag chair and I would read all day and then I would have lunch and that would be the only thing I did all day other than read, just because I would get so excited, so into something and then I would want to tell my mom exactly everything about the whole book so I would spend about, after I finished the book then I would spend like three days explaining the book to my mom.

When asked to think about influences on her love of reading, Marsha recalled her grade 1 teacher and her “super fun activities.” As an example, Marsha mentioned a task called, My Special Day, whereby each student would choose the format by which they could introduce themselves and their family to classmates. Her parents suggested doing a movie and this activity turned into a very strong positive memory from her early schooling.

Marsha indicated that “physical books are (still her) go to thing,” but admitted to downloading most of her books so she could have a “giant library in a tiny apartment” and read from her iPad “on the bus.” She felt that she was not the same binge reader she once had been.

She stated:

When I was younger, I would bring my book everywhere and we'd be like at a family walk in Beacon Hill Park and I got my nose in the book, you know, walking, walking, walking and trying not to run into things and everyone else is talking and I'm off in my own little world.

Lately, especially after a literacy course at university, Marsha had been reevaluating her own concept of what constitutes reading. The instructor in the course highlighted a multi-definition of *text* and how “it’s all encompassing and everywhere.” Before, the concept of a physical book was tied to reading, but Marsha came to learn that reading was connected to multimedia forms as well. As an example, she mentioned conversations she has had with her many friends who play video games, who told her that “a lot of their reading experience came from very story intensive video games.” She thought that technology was having a deep impact on reading and literacy and, although kids today were also more savvy and wiser because of it, she felt “privileged to have grown up with less technology.” She said:

I feel like I could trust everything ... I read when I was younger... now young people have to learn really young to be critical at everything they are reading and viewing and consuming just because... it’s often opinion and conjecture... or even purposely misleading.

Marsha recalled a time when she had found out that something she had read online was untrue and how “upsetting” it had been for her, and that she did “not envy kids today.” Overall, Marsha’s memories of her early literacy experiences indicate that her parents, through book recommendations and providing a nurturing literacy environment, exerted a strong influence on the kind of reader she had become. She strongly valued choice and relevance as positive elements in her school experience.

Envisioning herself as a teacher of early reading.

In the first interview, Marsha was asked to imagine how she was going to teach reading: how children learn to read, what approaches she was going to use, and how she envisioned her classroom and her students. She indicated that her first understandings about what it meant to read and how to teach it came from her parents. She stated:

When I was taught to read, it was a one-on-one activity. From these experiences, I believed that you were supposed to read at your reading level. I thought that it was acceptable and even fun to revisit books that were now below your current stage but that, aside from making progress visible, they had little learning value.

From having had her parents sit beside her while she read, providing a word if she struggled, or correcting her if she mispronounced a word, she gathered that it was extremely important to dispel any misconceptions as soon as they occurred. She believed “that the normal progression in learning to read was for students to learn their letters, letter-sound combination, words, then sentences.” Marsha also believed that children were “immensely curious”, so the most important element in helping them learn to read was to provide them with books they were interested in and they would put forth the effort. She also felt that patience was needed “because no one likes to feel that they need to be quicker, or they’re not doing a good job.” Marsha felt that using digital technology would be “really interesting and helpful in the classroom, if available... students love tablets, and touchscreens are awesome for them and they really engage with those.” She stated that technology can support students in becoming more self-directed. She said, “It’s a difficult process for a teacher to attend to every student in a large class and technology helps everyone move along.” Marsha also planned on using reading buddies, because it was valuable for both older and younger students. She also wanted to create a well-stocked library with books students could take home and have class sets of iPads so that kids could read ebooks. She felt that there would be a wide variety of experiences, abilities, interests and socioeconomic backgrounds among her students and she wanted to provide many opportunities for student sharing. She believed that it would be more challenging to teach younger students because there would be more disparity in stages of development “before school levels it out.”

Marsha thought that not all her students would be as excited about reading as she was because her own sister did not enjoy reading. It would be “detrimental to treat your students as if

they were mini versions of yourself,” she said. She believed that kids today were reading mostly on social media platforms, watching YouTube videos and creating their own channels, and possibly reading and generating their own fiction online. These factors contributed to her feeling that it was important to use non-print media for students who were not interested in books (e.g., “videogame or something that has a storyline”). Marsha believed that making school “relevant and interesting” to kids was “half the challenge.” It made her anxious to think that she “might fail” at making that connection.” She said, “It would be devastating... if I created a negative experience for someone around reading, which is something I really enjoy.” Marsha’s understanding of reading pedagogy derived from the approaches used by her parents to teach her to read. As a result, she believed a bottom-up approach was the best method and that inaccuracies when reading needed to be corrected immediately.

Next, I describe Marsha’s interpretation of her participation in the reading processes course and how coursework contributed to her understanding of early reading pedagogy.

Learning about teaching reading through reading processes coursework.

Marsha felt that participation in the course really added to her understanding of how reading is taught. She was surprised by the variety of activities that could be used to engage kids in reading. Although she found many of the activities that the instructor shared “gimmicky” and “hokey” (e.g., word catchers), she could understand why kids would find them engaging. Marsha completed most of the assigned reading and thought the course textbook provided many activities that were “practical and applicable” in teaching fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Some of the topics in the course that she found to be most influential were: fluency, which she indicated to have shifted how she was going to teach reading; and keeping things manageable (e.g., volume of text, etc.), or “portioning it out”, which she felt would be

helpful for struggling, but also voracious, readers. The course introduced her to a variety of picture books she could use in her teaching, but Marsha was very motivated to continue to expand her “library of titles, so to speak, especially for younger grades.” It was important for her not to make book choices based solely on the books she knew and had enjoyed as a child because she really wanted to “try not to be dated.” Overall, Marsha felt “a lot more prepared than when [she] started the course.” She admitted to being “in flux,” in that fluency had “become a bigger priority and accuracy maybe has decreased a little bit” and she was trying to find a “new personal balance for different priorities within reading.”

Marsha highlighted many messages about teaching reading obtained from the classes as well as from the textbook. She understood that having students guessing words incorrectly during reading was not only a normal and acceptable practice, but a valuable one because it showed that they “have confidence in their ability to figure out the word” and that they “are making connections between letters and sounds that they know.” Marsha also indicated that “reading the same text multiple times is a beneficial exercise and should be encouraged rather than discouraged.” She stated that she once believed that the goal of having a child read a book was to improve that child's reading ability so the “instinct was to push them towards a new and perhaps harder book.” Readers “should be encouraged to make as many connections regarding the text as possible to deepen comprehension.” Marsha indicated that the course emphasized “connecting texts to other texts, connecting texts to an aspect or event in their life and connecting texts to world events.” The more connections a reader made, “the more they will remember about a text” and the better they would understand what the text was trying to do. Marsha also understood that “fluency links directly to comprehension.” She stated:

Simply because a child is able to sound out each word in a sentence does not mean that they understand that sentence. If they are able to read a sentence fluently however, they

are very likely to understand its meaning...., it is acceptable and even preferable to overlook small omissions or pronunciation or word errors if a child is reading fluently while staying true to the meaning of the text.

Throughout the course, the instructor also highlighted the idea that “learning to read should always be a positive activity for a student and it is a teacher's job to do their utmost to keep it positive.” Marsha stated that the “materials provided should be interesting to the reader and appropriate to their reading abilities.” Students should be “encouraged to read by seeing other people model everyday reading behavior” and by “making it fun (e.g., hidden codes, journaling about themselves, etc.).” She mentioned that when using levelled books, advancing to a higher level, should be “framed in terms of the books they are currently reading being too easy for them rather than asking them to try something harder than what they currently read.” Marsha also remarked that it was “important to keep samples of students' work and to allow them to re-read books that they once had struggled with so their progress was visible to them.” Marsha also understood from the course that “diversity in all areas is the key to a well-rounded literacy education,” and that children need to be “exposed to as many forms of reading and writing as possible.” Marsha claimed that they “should be exposed as frequently as possible to silent self-reading, being read to, reading out loud to someone else, practicing writing in a general sense, working on spelling, printing and expanding their vocabularies.” If a student “misses out on one or more of the above components, they will fail to meet their full literacy potential.”

Evolving understanding about teaching early reading after the reading processes course. Marsha reported that listening to her classmates' feelings and attitudes towards reading made her more aware of activities that might make students uncomfortable, such as someone nearby listening to them read, or being called to read aloud during “round robin” reading. Consequently, she now would consider making some of the reading activities voluntary in her

classroom. Marsha also understood why children did repeated readings, the same way she had done as a child. She once thought that kids simply liked repetition but now realizes that every time they read they were picking up on different cues such as “behaviours”, “facial expressions” and “(were) not just reading for the plot.” Another of her realizations was the importance of making learning fun and accessible. Marsha felt she had been a bit “too serious about learning” and had always envisioned herself doing “all these serious scholarly activities and stuff with grade ones.” Now, when planning, she would ask herself questions, such as: “Is this friendly? Is it inviting? Is it manageable? Is it accessible?” Overall, the course had helped her develop “this whole empathy component” about what learning was like from the perspective of a child (e.g., realizing that little hands get tired easier when writing). The instructor talked about the importance of introducing students to a variety of genres. Marsha thought that a “natural assumption for children's literature” was to gravitate to fiction. She said, “Fairy tales are such a big thing, right?” Now, “thinking back” Marsha realized that she had “known a few people” (one boy in her class when she was little) who were really interested in nonfiction, and it was hard to find children's books that were nonfiction and “not very complex.” She admitted to never being “really interested in nonfiction”, but now, after listening to her classmates and her instructor’s experiences, was very aware “of the diversity of readers” and the importance of “not just going on (her) own experiences.” In class, it was discussed how spelling tests did not increase comprehension, but Marsha disagreed. She supposed her differing belief came from how it had been done in her home. She said:

I hated it - but my dad was really big on spelling tests and I had to like, know what they meant and everything and the dumb definitions and so I think I probably gained a bit of comprehension... and of course, like it's still important to know how to spell the words, and to get a larger vocabulary.

As a compromise to teaching vocabulary in “isolation,” she liked the idea suggested in the textbook to anchor new words into “more tangible, concrete” ways (e.g., objects, pictures, building a web) for students to help them learn and remember words. Fluency was “another big focus of the course,” the idea that the “pretend reading” that children do, stringing “all these words together in a nice, smooth sentence” was a very important pre-reading stage. She said, “I just figured, as soon as you learn words, and then you can identify them more easily, the smooth reading just is a product of that... and it's almost like the comprehension comes alongside, not before.” Marsha’s “natural instinct would be to jump in and correct” students when they were not reading a word accurately. Now she was aware she needed to practice to “stay out of it a little bit” and let students build their fluency. Marsha felt that this understanding “sort of shifted” what was going to happen when she actually taught reading. Regarding retelling, Marsha said:

I thought about retelling as like a really intense, you know like, mental activity. I just thought, ‘Oh yeah. You read a book. You understand what happens and then you can tell me what happens’ but just the diversity and possibilities and what you can do with retelling is just great.

The instructor provided various methods for retelling stories “usually like a prop or something like that, that helps like trigger the memory. So they (students) can remember events in a story.” As for using texts in teaching, Marsha understood that she needed to “keep things manageable” and “portion things out,” which she felt “would be helpful both for struggling readers and for really voracious readers, too.” She explained, “if there's like a class text that you want them to read together, giving it in little chunks is less intimidating, but it also, you know, limits some other readers who might wanna go ahead and read the whole thing and then spoil it for everybody.” Marsha highlighted aspects in coursework that had confirmed and/or changed her prior understanding. She also indicated areas that caused tension in her beliefs about teaching reading.

Marsha had retained several of her beliefs, but they had been “enriched or expanded by the course.” She had always believed that an enormous part of teaching was to excite students primarily through the materials they were reading. The course expanded her repertoire in the “ways for doing this, such as having people the students look up to read to them, like parents or older students.” The course also confirmed the importance of reading aloud to students daily and that “you can’t leave it all to home”. She added that the course revealed to her the value of reading aloud to older students, too. Marsha had associated “read alouds with elementary school”, but remembered having a couple of teachers do it in high school and she had “loved it.” Marsha had formed a belief during undergraduate studies, through courses in Old and Middle English, that learning to read and write in English, with all of its exceptions to the rules, was “very difficult” and “young students who have limited vocabularies have a hard road ahead.” The textbook readings and classes confirmed for her that learning to read and write in English could present many difficulties to students. Marsha believed that “practice makes perfect,” and that students’ reading skills would only improve with practice. The course instructor reminded her of the need to “recognize students' limitations,” in that “reading for young students is mentally as well as physically exhausting.” Marsha stated that she had become “better equipped to ensure the practice that my students do will be less daunting, more exciting and of more value than being practice for practice's sake.” Drawing on her personal school experiences, Marsha remembered being “always delighted when [she] realized or discovered seemingly coincidental connections to something talked about in class.” She said:

The connections were often to something that had come up in different classes, in books I was reading or in popular media. These links were fascinating to me. They piqued my curiosity and were much more easily remembered compared to other school material. As a young person, I assumed that most of these connections (especially the obscure ones) were purely coincidental.

Through her participation in the course, the value of connections was confirmed but she had come to realize that most of those “connections” were “intentional” on the part of the teacher.

She stated:

Given that this was something that excited me to learn, I hope to help my students to see and make as many connections as possible. By setting up connections for classroom materials in all three categories, the hope is that students will see and respond to the connections that will have the most impact for them as individuals.

Marsha could not recall specific areas of tension, but said, “I know there were a few times.... but can’t remember the specifics... I block out stuff that I don’t think is, you know, good, or that I’m gonna use.”

Marsha realized that “there is a lot more about teaching reading” than she had initially considered. Prior to the course, she had not reflected too much on teaching and learning to read and had thought, “If I know how to read, I know how to teach reading.” Marsha noticed some shifts in her thinking happening throughout the course. For example, because she had never struggled with reading herself, she hadn’t “thought about the reading process too much”, but now found it “interesting” to better understand what “goes on inside the head of a struggling reader.” In relation to reading aloud, Marsha said, “When I was read to as a student, I found it thoroughly enjoyable but viewed it as a reward or a treat.” Now she saw it as a valuable teaching practice because “it models what an accomplished reader sounds like,” “previews the content of a book for them, and allows students to read books that might be just a little too hard for them if they had never seen that book before.” Marsha had always believed that children were naturally curious and would feel excited about reading to find out information; however, she now considered that struggling readers might feel intimidated and not confident in their ability, and as a result were “probably going to avoid it, even if they are curious about what’s in some of the books.” Understanding the role of fluency in comprehension shifted how she would interact with

students while listening to them read. While before the course she “would have stopped a reading student at each wrongly guessed word and asked them to look at it again, sound it out and use the pictures to make sure they got the right word” now she would forego the interruption to “favour the reader continuing reading their passage.” She understood how “the preservation of fluency cannot only lead to quicker progress acquiring reading skills but also to more confident readers because they are not being forced to stop after every word to be corrected.” Marsha acknowledged that the “biggest” shift in her thinking centered around “learning vocabulary meaning.” She said, “I had previously assumed that because children learn so naturally, that if they ask what a word means and it is explained to them, that they will remember. Through the reading course, I realized that this was absolutely not the case,” and that many students need multiple opportunities to learn with multiple examples, as she explained:

I came to understand that children's conceptions of most words are deeply rooted in concrete ideas and that abstract definitions rarely stick with them. Expanding a student's vocabulary has to be so much more than telling them a new word and what it means. They need to be shown.

To conclude, prior to enrolling in the reading processes course, Marsha thought that knowing how to read was enough to know how to teach others to read. After the course, Marsha realized that teaching reading is much more complex.

Next, I illustrate Marsha's perspectives on her practicum. I include a description of the practicum placement and her experience teaching reading. Marsha also shared her views on influences on her planning and teaching and on how well the reading processes coursework prepared her for practicum.

Learning about teaching reading through practicum.

Marsha described her placement as “unique” because she requested that it be at her previous school with her previous grade 1 teacher, who had been teaching at the private school

for over 20 years, and who Marsha respected as a teacher. The class was composed of 23 students, six of whom were boys. One of the boys had severe anxiety; one of the girls had been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD). In Marsha's words there were quite a "few hyper girls," too. Marsha described the class as being generally calm, with predictable, daily routines. Students arrived every morning to a daily schedule, morning message and a calendar of activities on a Smartboard, followed by story time on the carpet. Most days, there were opportunities for silent reading. Often, students chose a book from the well-stocked class library; other times, the teacher chose the book for them. Students could choose their reading spot in the classroom or in a grassy area just outside the classroom. There was a structured home reading program and a weekly spelling test. Students could practice at home with their parents and the teacher provided many opportunities in class to practice and learn the words through booklets with word shapes, activities with a word wall, writing words into sentences on an individual whiteboard ("which the kids loved") and practicing as a class on the Smartboard. Marsha perceived the class as "low tech" because the teacher was "still trying to get used to using the Smartboard" for teaching. When asked to compare the teaching she observed now to when she had been a grade 1 student, Marsha said it was difficult to do because she was looking at everything through a "different lens", now focused on the teaching. Still, she described the class as being more "lax."

Marsha's assignment involved teaching creative writing, using the *Little Red Riding Hood* story as a model. She started by reading a few different versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" over the course of a couple of days, and discussed what was different/same about the various versions. The first activity centered around a worksheet on which the students had to write a summary of the story. To explain the activity to the students, she asked, "If someone had

never read Little Red Riding Hood before, how would you tell them what it's about really quickly?" Marsha said that there were "lots of fun responses" and that "they were all focused on different details... I guess which ones were their favourite." Marsha used the Smartboard to "do the worksheets." She explained:

So, I had them on the Smartboard and then it was, you know, the first thing they always did was put their name on the paper. So, they knew how to write their name. And that was practice, we did a character study of Little Red Riding Hood. So, I did a lot of that with them. So, I'd model it a lot, um, and show them, you know. First I would ask them questions, 'What is she like?' And then they would give me words and then I'd write them on the Smartboard. Um. And then I asked them to maybe pick a few of those. Or if you have one that you like better, and it's not on there, you can ask me how to spell it later and put it on your worksheet. And then they started to create their own characters. So, the first thing I asked them for was just a name for their character. So, they created names then, like, "What is your character? Is it a human?" And I modeled that too. So, I made my own little character that was a robot, but I had to ask them not to copy it, yeah. Because then otherwise, you know, I'd have 23 that were exactly the same.

Marsha admitted that there were a "lot of copying ideas." To further scaffold them towards writing their "version" of the story, she "talked about the beginning of a story and what it needed... to introduce a character so we need to know what their name is, and what they are, and where they live." She said they all did "once upon a time, because it was just the easiest way to get them going." I modelled the writing of my version on the Smartboard and "some of them copied mine mostly verbatim, with their own details inside of it." To help them with the ending, Marsha said she had to probe them quite a bit because they were struggling with writing the resolution to the problem. She asked, "Why is this bunny rabbit suddenly destroying the town? And they would say, 'Because he's the bad guy.' And I would say, 'well, maybe there's some reason he's bad' and I tried to get into that a little bit with them." Marsha took the opportunity, while her mentor was teaching the class, to conference individually with students. She had them read the story while she made notes on what needed attention, "mostly for the reading buddies."

The reading buddies helped students with their rough copy, fixing spelling, prompting for clarification, and later typing their stories in the computer lab. Marsha felt that the students were really into the creation of the story and thought it was “important” mainly because of the process used to create their final story. She said, “We're doing multiple copies and having conferences, and then they typed it out, and so it's like serious stuff.”

Marsha made “very interesting” observations during her time teaching. She had told students not to worry about their spelling and that in a rough draft they “should just write their best guess when they came to a word they didn't know how to spell.” When it was time for students to print their “good copy,” Marsha said, “I thought that they would have at least some idea about their guess writing. But some of them did so much guess writing that they just, like, had no clue what any of it said.” Another interesting observation Marsha had was that it took some students a great deal of repetition to learn. For example, she mentioned a student who was very good at using visual cues to figure out words but was very hesitant to make guesses. Marsha explained:

I would try to get him to sound it out but he didn't really um, connect the letters with sounds yet so much so I would give him this word that was gonna be repeated. And it was OK for that page, but then, the next page he would forget it again. You give it to him again and then maybe even it's the line down and I'm going, ‘OK. Well, what's the word that we just said up here?’ and he doesn't know anymore.

Marsha also found it curious that some students who were really good readers “had trouble focusing” and would “read half a page and lose interest in the book.” She wondered, “How are you ever going to learn to read like this? You're not even reading half a story so you don't even know what's going on.” Marsha was also surprised that some students “would still misspell a word when they were copying it” and sometimes “would mix up the words (she) had given them. She said:

They'd ask, 'How do I spell flower?' OK, flower. And then, 'How do I spell plant.' And then I write plant. And then they're not sure which one's flower and which one's plant. Most of the really adept readers would know, especially just by looking at the starting letters.

Reflecting on teaching students to write a story, Marsha stated:

I definitely thought it was going to be easier than it was, but uh, it was definitely really fun... You forget, and it was such a long time ago that I was in grade 1. So, you forget just where they have to start from. Literally nothing. So, like looking at these funny shapes and squiggle on pages and trying to figure what this means.

Marsha learned how to use the Smartboard during her practicum and “really enjoyed” using it, finding it “really helpful to have the giant worksheet on the Smartboard while they (students) had it on their desk because a lot of them otherwise would probably get lost.” She also used it to display the *Little Red Riding Hood* story while she read it and the students “followed along on their paper copies.” She wanted to give the students “tons of practice” in knowing the story well. Marsha used the Smartboard to show how words were spelled. When the students asked her how to spell a word, Marsha said:

If it's something that just they are going to need, like a name, I would write it on their paper. But if it's something that maybe the whole class might need, we could write it up on the Smartboard and then we could scroll down when we don't need those words anymore and then do more. And keep them for later reference.

Although Marsha felt that there wasn't a time when she “wasn't teaching something,” she didn't feel like she taught reading, “in the sense that we were standing in the front of the class, you know, teaching them how to read.” She conceded, “they did a fair bit of, sort of reading and writing, as well in science and math” because “there were a lot of worksheets that accompanied the activities.”

When articulating influences on her planning and teaching, Marsha indicated that her main considerations were: “is this something they're (students) going to like and be fun or, is it

going to be something not necessarily fun but that they're interested or excited in?" She requested to teach a science unit on plants because she enjoyed gardening and remembered from elementary school "growing things and really loving that and just being fascinated by it."

Through the weekly observations on the plant growth she could hear her students say, "Wow, look how much they've grown!" and could tell that her students were also enjoying it. Especially for science and math, she said, "I tried to do a lot of things that I felt that I would've enjoyed when I was younger...definitely, personal interest factors in there a lot." As an example, she recounted:

... in math, we did a, um, like a volume activity and using, like different containers and rice and we'd pour them into each other and see which one holds more rice, and they'd have to guess first and then test it out. That was something I would've really liked doing when I was younger, just, you know, sitting there and playing with rice and containers.

She thought that the "creative writing thing" was "really fun" because they got "to make up silly nonsense. She found it "stressful" to keep the modelling of the writing brief because she "didn't want to confuse them with gobs of writing." She recounted that when planning:

You don't see an activity and say, 'Oh, I really wouldn't like that activity but maybe my students would.' I guess I didn't really do that because most of the activities that I found that I thought that they wouldn't like, I wouldn't like either, because they're either dry and boring or very laborious and repetitive.

Marsha felt prepared going into practicum; however, after the first week, she realized that she wasn't as prepared as she thought she was:

I didn't realize just how detailed I needed to be, she said, "I found out pretty quickly that I need to know where exactly they're going to put their sheets when they're done, what is going to happen the second they're done, and what are they going to do for the rest of the time or while the others are catching up.

Marsha felt confident that she "wasn't going to run out of material or ideas for projects or activities" because throughout the university course she had been writing down the titles of many

books and collecting all “the activities that were presented alongside them” by the instructor and in her classmates’ presentations. She said, “If you’re not exposed to other people and the activities that they come up with, um, you’d probably wind up probably... sort of... mostly doing the same things or same iterations over and over again.”

Even though it “wasn’t a huge thing in the course, it was just sort of talked about for 20 minutes,” she felt that knowing about the program Daily 5 gave her a “well-rounded understanding of literacy as this... like... multifaceted thing, rather than just literacy as reading.” She felt this information prepared her for “the volume of reading, writing, speaking, and listening” that happened when teaching. As an example, she had thought that “speaking” was important but she “hadn’t given it, um, a really solid tie to literacy.” Also, she said, “before the course, I definitely, thought of listening to read alouds as sort of a treat/pleasure thing rather than too much of a learning experience.” During practicum she “saw” what had been talked about in class. She explained,

I would read a story and if it was a good story then I’d see like eight of them during the silent reading time trying to get that story like, ‘Oh, yeah, I want to read that,’ because, all of a sudden they would be a) more interested in it because they now know what it’s about; and, b) more confident that they can read it because I had just read it out loud and they know what it’s about and, you know, they’ve heard some of the words in there.

She learned strategies in the course to get “deeper into a book especially with younger children.” She admitted, “Normally, my instinct would just be to read them a story rather than having those, um, you know, pre-read questions and then maybe stopping in the middle and, and then post-reading discussions, that sort of thing.” During her practicum, she had “really good discussions” as a result of what she had learned in class and remarked that students got “more out of it that way.”

Influence of practicum on understanding of how to teach early reading. The course

introduced Marsha to word walls. She said, “Throughout my entire elementary experience, I never had word walls” and had a feeling that “kids might not be into that.” However, during practicum she saw that the students responded very positively to them. Marsha was also very impressed to see the “students reading to one another.” Referring to the course, she said:

We talked about... like... reading to a group, reading to yourself, reading to another person... that sort of thing, and that wasn't really something that I thought about before. Because I guess my assumptions were that it would get too silly, you know... or they just got together and chit chat. But they actually really enjoyed reading books to one another.

During practicum, Marsha learned how her mentor teacher developed in students a “self-awareness of ‘What can I read?’” Marsha noticed that there was:

... sort of a rule of thumb, if they opened the book and there were at least five words on the first page that they had no idea what they were, they probably shouldn't read that book by themselves, that maybe they should do it with their parent.

Marsha was surprised at how well the students could select books appropriate for their skill level. She “had assumed that they were going to just pick books that they liked, and not necessarily look at the level.” The course instructor had “warned” them about “leaning too much on levelled readers just because then they (students) might get used to being a blue level and not wanna stray from that, and maybe try something different.” Marsha “anticipated there might be some kind of self-consciousness about reading levels”, but found that students were “pretty good at that” and “very encouraging with one another.” She admitted not having had much exposure to “levelled readers” growing up, as mostly her parents chose books for her. She described it as a, “revelation” when “quite late in elementary school” she realized she could choose her own books. She was “really glad” to have seen students so early having “the freedom the select their books.” Going into practicum, Marsha knew that she “wanted them (students) to be reading things they're interested in”, but she had “visualized (herself) choosing books that (she) thought they were going to be interested in.” She commented that perhaps her younger sister might have

“struggled a lot with reading because she wasn't really in control of what she was reading. And nothing really interested her that was put in front of her.”

Overall, Marsha still believed that “learning to read is just practice because English is such an odd language.” As an example, she pointed out the spelling of two words that sound the same but are spelled differently, such as “right and write.” Reflecting on learning to read and write, she said, “a lot of it is just visual memorization.” That’s why she was so surprised that the students “don't know their guess spelling the next day.” She had figured that it would be easy for them to read their spelling since they were the ones that “had sounded something out in their heads, and then put it on paper.”

Current beliefs about teaching early reading.

Marsha declared that her journey toward learning to teach reading started with the first literacy course she took. Her preparation lacked much experience in schools to draw upon, except for a brief one-to-one interaction with a young child while babysitting. She said, “I kind of pictured myself working with a whole class in the same way that you work with someone one-on-one, which is totally not how you do it.” Her notions about teaching had been vague because she didn’t “have super strong opinions on the way things must be done” and she knew “that especially in learning, there are so many different ways that people can learn.” Some of those ways were “by rote” and “through creative exploration.” During her first literacy course, she became aware of “the diversity of what a text was and how much students had to learn to read.” Initially, Marsha had only considered students needing to learn to read physical print, but she came to understand that they also had to learn to read “pictures, body language, facial expressions and things like that.” She realized that she had “forgotten having to learn all those other things, so that was probably the thing that (she had) gained the greatest appreciation for.”

The most significant learning from the reading processes course was the realization of the abundance of “physical materials, things to work with.” She was “astounded at how much there was out there.” She realized, especially with picture books, that she had been limited to her own experiences with literature, but came to realize that “there are so many amazing picture books that have come out since I was younger.” The course also provided her with a “broad range of things that you can do with a book or other texts, rather than just reading it or looking at it and things like that, just to get involved with it.” Marsha also acknowledged a change in her assumption that mistakes needed to be corrected promptly. She referenced her experiences at home with her parents: “When my parents wrote with me, if I made a mistake on a word, they would correct me, and then again if I made it again, and that sort of thing, so that was sort of my model and that’s what I thought.” During practicum, the emphasis on the importance of fluency in the reading methods class as “being this integral part to learning reading” was made visible to her. She explained:

I watched them read something and often they would read a sentence haltingly and they would try and flip the page, and if I stopped them and asked them to go back and tell me what had happened, sometimes it would be really difficult for them. So then we would have to try to read over again as a whole sentence for then to actually grasp the meaning and I don’t think I had considered that too much before the reading course, but it was like fluency over exactness, because the idea was that it was okay for them to be guessing words as long as it mostly made sense with the text, then it was probably an okay thing to skip over for now and just make a mental note of, and come back to later, or then you work on it during word work or things like that.

Marsha also felt “strongly” about giving students things to read or write that they were interested in. She said, “I know they love playing pretend and making checklists or love lists or grocery lists” and it was important to “give them the sense that what they’re doing is important and good.” She felt that we tended to minimize and “treat it a little too trivially” the “small steps,” like if “they are only reading See Spot Run” we thought “Oh, isn’t that cute?” but “it’s such a

tough learning curve, but it is such an important life skill.” Marsha believed that we needed to let students “know that this (reading) is a skill that they are developing and that they need” and we needed to give them meaningful work to do and not make them “copy out things that they are not interested in.” As an example, she claimed that students “love their journals because they get to talk about their weekend and things like that, or even the news, and they get to be the center of attention and work on their speaking skills and things like that, you know... relevance.” Marsha felt that practicum “sort of transferred the theory into practice because in theory everything is beautiful and streamlined and very easy” and she was able to see how to do that “with a physical class of individuals because they are so different from one another.” In practicum, she learned to be “more flexible with things” through the realization that “not everyone was going to be as invested in certain activities as (she wanted) them, so what do you do with that?” Presently, Marsha felt that teaching reading was:

... organized chaos or maybe like an adventure, you don't really know where they're going to go or where you're going to go and it's sort of what needs to happen in the moment a lot of the time, and then sometimes you have a plan and sometimes you don't, so yes, it's kind of chaotic, in a good way.

Marsha still had some anxiety around the varying levels in the classroom and “that what (she'll) give them or what (she'll) teach them won't stick with them.” She believed that students needed lots of practice and timely support. She was concerned about sending students to the next grade when “they're not reading where they sort of should or could, and there's not a lot (she) can do about it.” Marsha wanted them all to “be capable and confident in themselves because it is such an important part of life.” Nevertheless, Marsha believed that “reading... it's something that's going to happen anyway...like eventually... because it's literally everything all around them.”

Marsha felt the reading processes course should have been a year-long course with a stronger focus on how to teach early reading. She admitted to still being “pretty fuzzy on how you would go about teaching” the first stages of learning to read. She stated:

I would probably start with their names, you know, because most of them start to learn that at home, but after that I am not sure what we do in terms of figuring out letter sounds and stuff like that... that sort of bewilders me, how to just start the process.

Overall, Marsha indicated that the reading processes course corrected misconceptions she had formed from her own experiences in learning to read. For instance, she now placed an increased focus on fluency, and less on accuracy, in reading. The course also contributed to her understanding that re-reading and memorizing texts were important pre-reading steps. Nevertheless, Marsha viewed practicum as a more valuable learning experience because it provided a real context to the theory learned in coursework.

Gillian

Gillian was 26 years old and had an undergraduate degree in Social Sciences. She had no prior experience in teaching or working with children. She struggled learning to read, was diagnosed early with having learning disabilities, and remembered spending the majority of her time during elementary school in the resource room for literacy support. Gillian described her parents as supportive but not overly involved. Her siblings excelled in school and she felt pressure to be more academic; however, instead of doing homework, she spent all her time and energy doing sports. Gillian reported that she still struggled with reading and still did not enjoy it, and, as a result, felt very apprehensive about becoming a teacher.

The next section includes Gillian’s biographical narrative of early literacy experiences at home and at school. The biographical narrative is followed by a description of how Gillian envisions herself as a teacher of reading.

Early literacy experiences: Memories of home and school.

As a child, Gillian struggled to learn to read. She remembered having books “around the house” and her parents reading to her, but did not have strong memories about the books they read or if she had enjoyed being read to. She thought that her siblings “excelled in school” and recalled them reading at home. Although she felt pressure to learn to read, she preferred to go to “sports practice” and seldom did her homework. Her parents were very resistant to her learning disability diagnosis and, although they accepted her getting help at school, they did not try to get involved in finding ways to support her school work at home.

Gillian started receiving speech and resource support in grade 1. She recounted times in the support room outside of the classroom, playing many phonic games and sight word activities. She had great “difficulty sounding words properly.” She recalled “feeling shocked” in grade 2 when, during a partner activity, she was required to read a classmate’s journal and “he had written so much.” Until grade 6, all reading and writing took place in the resource room. She was not “aware” that she had “disabilities.” She remembered feeling “happy” about going into the resource room “with her friends.” She felt it was something special she got to do. Gillian had strong memories of the literacy work she did in the resource room, but not the work from the classroom. In the resource room, she remembered sitting in groups of three at round tables, an alphabet strip above the chalkboard, and “lots of worksheets.” Mostly, they were given books to read silently but she “was not reading, just looking at the book.” Throughout her schooling, she developed strategies to do her work without having to read. As an example, she mentioned just reading “the highlighted keywords,” doing “fake reading” all through high school, and would read “parts of books just enough to write an essay.” She also recalled “memorizing” what she had to read from hearing other people read before her. She expressed surprise at how she “got

away with that.” Gillian did not do any reading for pleasure outside of school. She recalled most of her classrooms being “dull.” She did enjoy her grade 6 classroom, with pictures on the wall grouped around themes that would change every so often, like “travelling the world through the year.” Through participation in sports teams, Gillian developed strong friendships with other students who were “keen readers,” and this helped her to see that it was “important to read more.” Influenced by friends, she read Harry Potter in high school and liked it. She said, “I am competitive, so I wanted to compete for better grades.” For her, getting good grades made her feel like she was doing well.

Gillian recalled negative experiences from her school years. She especially disliked being corrected, being made to repeat a word multiple times because of her speech impediment, and having to answer questions on the readings that frequently she had not done. While she now needs complete silence to read and do her work, when she was younger it was very difficult for her to sit still during silent reading time. Gillian remembered another particularly “painful” experience in elementary school when a substitute teacher asked her to read aloud. When Gillian stumbled, the substitute teacher asked, “Haven’t you learned how to read?” Her mother still says, “Remember when that teacher did that?” There was also a time she got suspended in grade 4. She started to “skip the class” during the time that a “boring teacher would come and read to the class and she didn’t have a book to follow along.” Gillian said, “There was no engagement. I’m a very hands-on person.” Another time, half-way through the school year, she was moved to a different class because the teacher said, “she could not teach her, that she was too disruptive.” At the time, Gillian was not too upset about the move because she was placed in a class where her best friend was. But as an adult, understanding the reason for that move made her feel negatively about it. When she was young, it didn’t bother her to leave the classroom to go to the resource

room, but now she was “touchy and sensitive” about her identity in relation to having a learning disability. Being in the “teacher’s program at university” gave her an awareness of effective teaching and triggered a negative view of how she was “treated by the system” as a child. She remarked, “It gives me anxiety to think about the past.” In some of her university classes, she had “difficulty engaging with stereotypes around LD, like it’s more prevalent in boys.” She said, “I was a gender confused little girl.” She was also resentful that her “siblings don’t have disabilities.” Often, her family would tease her “about mispronouncing things” and she would get angry. She would tell them, “You guys can’t make fun of me for this.” At university she noticed that it took her “a lot longer than (her) classmates to read something, and it’s not just that (she needed) more time, or less reading.” Gillian was aware that the university provided supports to students like her, but she refused to “make use of the services because of the stigma (she) now (attached) to it.” Reflecting on her early learning context, she said:

I just learned how to learn in an environment that probably wasn’t the best for me, and now there are these theories about the ways that different people learn that are daunting to use with others, and even worse to apply on myself.

Gillian realized that the stigma around going out of the classroom to receive support in the resource room started around grade 7. Curiously, when she moved to a new school for grade 7 her “special education paperwork was lost” and for that year she did not attend the resource room. It was then that she “began to see ‘going out’ as negative.” When she was re-diagnosed in high school, she refused to use the resource room. She thought that when she was younger she did not attach a stigma to it “because some of the kids that went were also athletic, liked and popular.”

Gillian still reads mostly for school requirements. She reported that she mainly checks news and social media online and occasionally reads a book, “a little bit to escape.” She said that

she had never read an ebook and was still self-conscious about her reading. She remembers words mainly visually and when reading still “skips a lot of words.” Sometimes when she knew the word but could not ‘read’ it, she would replace it with a synonym. She also changed sentences around but tried to do it in a way that preserved the meaning. She also pauses “a lot” while reading, and exclaimed, with all these struggles “I don’t know why I’m going to be a teacher.” Overall, although Gillian recalls a home environment that encouraged reading, such as parents reading to her, books available at home, and siblings who were avid readers, she struggled with learning to read or connect with books. In school, Gillian focused on sports and developed coping strategies to complete school work.

Envisioning herself as a teacher of early reading.

In the first interview, Gillian was asked to imagine how she was going to teach reading: how children learned to read, what approaches she was going to use, how she envisioned her classroom and her students. Gillian believed that “every student is different” and that “what motivates them to read is very important” whether it’s “pressure from parents or wanting to know things.” She believed that learning to read “needs the right kind of practice.” Even though she believed that “sounding things out and visual associations is good for all students,” she also thought it was important to “access all the ways they need to learn to read.” She planned to “listen to students read and ask questions to help them build metacognition.” However, she would not ask questions “in a way that’s accusatory, but instead supports the student to problem-solve, to be independent.” She would do more of this interactive reading and “less silent reading.” She especially liked the idea of taking her students “to do reading outside.” She planned to “communicate to students when (she is) testing for reading and not penalize their science test because of reading.” She wanted to continue to “work on giving specific positive

feedback without it being too general.” Gillian also planned to have a student-centered, individualized classroom in which the students “read what they want at their own pace.” She wanted most of the learning to be scaffolded by peers, with students “learning from each other” because, “I’m too flawed,” she said. Gillian envisioned a seating arrangement around pods and “definitely no rows.” She wanted to have “soft lighting and lots of visuals on walls from nature.” She viewed the “classroom to be a learning resource with different areas changing for different activities.” She believed that the “outdoors is very important for all learning capacities in kids” and wanted her class to be a “green space.” She also wanted a “small library area” with books that reflected her interests and had “connections and meaning.”

Gillian thought she had an “idealistic version” of what her students would be like and that they were “creative, curious, have lots of knowledge from their interests, travelling and other experiences” upon which she could draw. She thought that students would share her love for the outdoors. She believed that students had very different experiences than she had growing up, especially around technology, so they would “read lots of text messages and know more about social media” than she did. She said, “Even though students are diverse they will all be interested in what I’m doing [laughs].” She mused, “It’s weird, the world is kind of an interesting place now, parents are so busy that I’m not sure who’s teaching kids to read these days.” She acknowledged that there were many resources outside of home and school that could help (e.g., tutoring places), but that this “creates a gap between the ones that can afford it and the ones that can’t.” In teaching reading, Gillian was excited about “watching students put words together to create interesting sentences, express their ideas in original ways.” On the other hand, she felt anxious because she still struggled with her “own reading and pronouncing words.”

Overall, Gillian's understanding about reading was influenced by her struggles in learning to read and her identity as someone who does not enjoy reading. As a result, she believed that learning to read involved phonics' work and visual associations. Additionally, she believed it was important to learn the different ways in which students learn so as to provide them with the "right kind of practice." Next, I describe Gillian's interpretation of her participation in the reading processes course and how coursework contributed to her understanding of early reading pedagogy.

Learning about teaching reading through reading processes coursework.

Gillian described her experience in the reading methods class as being very positive, but admitted to not yet knowing "the secret to teaching reading." She said that the instructor shared "lots of handouts" and reminded the students "that they already knew a great deal about teaching reading from their own school experiences and from continuously teaching reading to (themselves)." Gillian was "skeptical at the message that teaching reading is too easy," that you just needed to show passion for books and kids would be motivated to read. She felt that maybe it was for her classmates, as "they know how to read so activities go as planned," and was curious "to see what happens during practicum."

Overall, she thought the course was "very practical, lots of demonstrations" and peer-sharing. She said, "I have 36 lesson plans as a result!" Even though she thought the textbook offered "very practical ideas" she admitted to having done only the first assigned readings. She confessed, "We stopped addressing the readings in class so I stopped reading." As for the instructor, Gillian appreciated the positive attitude and feedback, remarking, "You feel like a million bucks right after." She also felt that the class could "be really cheesy with lots of morals pushed on us with book choices... sometimes a story is just a story." Gillian felt that most

lessons were focused on teaching grades 2-4 and that the instructor was “very focused on practicum and will often say: ‘This will not make sense now but it will during practicum.’”

Gillian felt a great deal of frustration about this because she didn’t “want to wait for practicum – tell us now!”

One of the messages received during participation in the reading processes course was that “there’s no step by step guide with logical steps like beginning by sounding out.” Instead, what was important was to “do exposure and modelling for students.” The instructor was “all about student engagement,” and for that you needed to “plan in creative ways and give students choice.” In teaching reading, the emphasis needed to be “on the process of learning rather than the summative assessment.” Teaching needed to be “student-centered and personalized.” Gillian understood that teachers need to “engage with reading at their (students’) readiness level and interest.” Reading needed to be “taught in context by having a purpose for reading and that the “focus is on reading comprehension; reading as a way to get knowledge.”

Evolving understanding about teaching early reading after the reading processes course. Gillian felt that the course “covered the middle grades” and she did not feel she learned how to teach reading to “very young and older students.” For example, “What would strategies like a word wall look like in an older grade?” After participation in the course she was still grappling with many questions: “When assessing science projects from struggling readers, do you assess the reading or the science knowledge? How do you balance being inclusive and giving kids options to engage with and show learning in different ways while still requiring that they know how to read?” Gillian was still quite unsure of how to plan more inclusive lessons because she did not have an understanding of, or strategies on, how to teach reading to students with special needs. The reading course emphasized the use of books, but “what about other texts

that can be used to teach reading, like internet, posters, T-shirts with logos?” Gillian still felt unprepared to facilitate discussions on social justice or on other sensitive topics, saying, “critical literacy was definitely missing.” She highlighted aspects in coursework that had confirmed and/or changed her prior understanding. She also indicated areas that caused tension in her beliefs about teaching reading.

Gillian indicated that most of the course content and messages confirmed what she already believed about teaching reading. She was grateful for the opportunity to learn from the instructor but especially from her peers as they “showed me better ways of doing certain things.” There were also some aspects of the course that “conflicted” with Gillian’s prior beliefs. The main area of tension was around the idea “that everybody loves to read; or, if they don’t, they’re going to.” All that was needed was for the teacher to model “passion and excitement for books and reading” and plan “fun activities.” As “proof” that this was not the case, Gillian expressed having “great difficulty completing a course assignment that required (her) to share a book (she) had loved as a child.” She said, “I couldn’t remember one and my boyfriend couldn’t remember either; neither of us enjoyed reading as kids. So how dare this class make it seem like everyone loved to read, because not everyone does.” Gillian shared that she asked the instructor what she would do with a reluctant reader and the answer had been: “I have never had that issue.” Gillian said, “I didn’t believe it! I really don’t like overgeneralizing comments and the idea that everything needs to be fun; fun and engaging are two different things.” Gillian felt strongly that “no matter what your (teacher) enthusiasm is towards a book, poem or just reading in general, not every student will like reading.”

Another source of disagreement for Gillian was the idea that you had to find books with messages and prepare many activities around it. Gillian felt that books sometimes needed to be

read for enjoyment and nothing else. She said, “Some students struggle to just read and shouldn’t be burdened with also having to find the message; I want to be a positive influence on my students; don’t want to bury them in thought-provoking questions every single lesson.” She sometimes left the class “feeling down and burdened” with the heavy topics addressed through the book choices. Although Gillian liked “hands-on learning,” she struggled with the “sappy activities for primary students that always end up with some sort of craft.” She also disliked that the lessons that were shared were “always learning about the amazing stuff, the big themed units.” Gillian wanted to know how to address more practical aspects, such as “how to teach punctuation,” for example. She also believed that lessons needed to be inclusive and that the activities that were shared in class were designed to be used with average students. She wanted the instructor to model how to adapt them for “gifted or struggling readers,” for example. Comments about gender learning differences also made Gillian “feel very defensive.” Even though the instructor cited research evidence for the comments, Gillian believed that we should “focus on individual differences and stop referring to them as gender-based.” Gillian admitted, “never have seen choral reading in practice,” but she did not agree that it was “a good practice.” Another suggested strategy she disagreed with very strongly was the practice of “buddying a good reader with a struggling reader.” She felt that it would be really “frustrating for both readers because kids are smart and they understand why they were put together.” Gillian thought “it would place the struggling reader in a very vulnerable position in having to show their weakness to another student.” She admitted: “That’s a really personal thing. No one wants to be the dumb person in a class.” Gillian could see the benefits in “being able to do your work and then be able to explain it to somebody else is another step in your ability to, like your comprehension of a topic or it just challenges you in different ways.” However, she did not feel

that it was right to ask a student that was capable and finished their work early to go help someone who was struggling, “it shouldn’t be a chore; it should be engaging or a challenge to finish early.” Gillian reported changing some of her initial beliefs as a result of participation in the course. She indicated that her initial understanding about teaching reading was influenced by her own experience in learning to read. She believed that learning to read happened through a phonemic process and memorization of words, but the instructor had “dismissed that notion from the start.” The focus needed to be on “fluency and comprehension.” Gillian also admitted that even though she had a very negative attitude toward the “always positive message of the class,” she could also see how some activities could make reading fun. She felt more confident because she had a repertoire of “strategies to use that can work for different kids.” She also became aware “that it’s awesome to read aloud to middle grade students, not just primary.” She had also realized that activities that she thought were only appropriate to do with older readers (e.g., co-creating a rubric) could be done with younger students, too.

To conclude, while Gillian expressed agreement with some of the ideas presented in the course (e.g., emphasis of teaching early reading needs to be on fluency and not on accuracy), she strongly rejected many others, especially the message that an exciting teacher and motivating resources are enough to motivate all students to want to read.

Next, I illustrate Gillian’s perspectives on her practicum. I include a description of the practicum placement and experience teaching reading. Gillian also shared her views on influences on her planning and teaching and on how well the reading processes coursework prepared her for practicum.

Learning about teaching reading through practicum.

Gillian completed her practicum in a grade 3 class of 19 students with quite a range of

skills and needs: two Indigenous students, one diagnosed with ADHD and on medication, a few diagnosed with learning disabilities, and one advanced learner. Four students in the class were receiving additional reading support. Some of the literacy routines in the classroom included a daily 40-minute DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). The goal for this time was for students to read continuously, individually, and quietly. Students who were “in an intervention program, or were... needing confidence” read to the teacher, to Gillian or other support teachers during that time. The students chose the books. There were also 35-minute blocks for language arts scheduled three times a week. Each day started with the teacher reading a math problem out loud, then students would also read it in choral style. The teacher also used this strategy in social studies and science, having volunteers read aloud or follow as she read. “It was a very capable class,” Gillian opined, with the majority of students reading at grade level, but she “recognized that some were going to struggle. She saw “many ambitious readers who were reading probably more at a grade 5 or 6 level and were actually going to those classrooms to get books.” She was surprised that there “was no stigma against reading.” She supposed it was because the “teacher made it a priority for kids to have the freedom to read whatever they wanted.” When they seemed to lose interest, the teacher brought books to class that she thought could help. “She (teacher) was also very honest about whether or not the book was at the right level.” Gillian noted, “I thought students really bought into it and I think they also really appreciated that quiet time.” Gillian also thought that “the class was very aware of who in this class was... like... the smart kids,” but she felt that the way reading happened in that class “smushed the hierarchy.” Gillian noted that the class was composed of students from “mixed backgrounds, with parents who were very involved, and others who were not involved at all.” The teacher did running records “with the students that were either in the middle or the lower range just to see if there

was progress.” The teacher told Gillian that she “aimed to do them three times a year but that it was really hard to find the time to do them.” In most of the lessons, the mentor teacher would read a passage and sometimes the students would help to read; she would stop once in a while to ask questions, then introduce an activity related to the reading, usually like a worksheet. After completing the activity, the students did sharing. The teacher used a “lot of formative assessment, marking little things along the way.” She liked a calm class and “maintained order” by having the students “consistently repeat the expectations back to her.” The mentor teacher “didn't really care about... like... spelling or anything like that until it came to an end product, and she said that was more so for the parents than it was for the kids.” She never gave tests, “except had a spelling test every week and she said that was also for the parents.”

Gillian's teaching assignment required her to teach poetry. She began by discussing with the students: “What is poetry? Who is a poet? Why do people write poetry? Why do we listen to poetry? and Why is poetry important?” She usually read a poem or asked students to help with the reading. Then she would give them a purpose for what they had to do. As an example, she said, “I would have introduced them to a literary device, or told them to listen for a certain thing.” After discussing the poem, they focused on the “purpose” for the day and then the students “would either usually write, not a full poem, but write their own simile or something like that.” Gillian planned activities for students to practice the concepts she wanted them to learn (e.g., similes, alliteration, personification). At the end of the unit, the students “were invited to try and use them all... um... but not forced to. It wasn't like you would get less marks if you didn't have them, but it was kind of a challenge that was posed to them like, ‘If you can get some, that's really awesome’ kind of thing.” Gillian acknowledged that she followed her mentor teacher's style of teaching of “having some reading, introducing a question, doing the reading,

having them talk about it.” Most of the student work was done in pairs and groups. The only thing that was individual was the writing of the final poem. The format of the final poem was modelled by Gillian. She said, “The students wrote pretty sophisticated poems” because “they enjoyed the idea that it didn't quite need to make sense.” She indicated the influence of the reading processes course in the fact that her teaching included “lots of questions, lots of activities, lots of review and lots of examples.”

In the second interview, Gillian was asked to reflect on the sources of influence on her planning and teaching. Before practicum, Gillian received support and feedback from the reading processes course instructor on the poetry unit she prepared for her students. Gillian also stated that her students “and their moods that day... whether or not they were enjoying something” were a big influence on how she implemented her lessons. She indicated that the teacher preparation program at the university influenced many of the teaching strategies and “philosophies that governed” [her approach]. She was quick to point out that it came from many courses and not only from the reading methods class. Her use of an inquiry-based approach was the result of a strong emphasis “in all classes that it was... like... ‘OK. We've got to do this.’” She tried “very rarely to lecture her students”, instead, she started her units “with a question or having kids make their own questions” and wanted the students to “figure it out on their own.” In a previous literacy course, she learned about the importance of “transparency in teaching,” the importance of explicitly telling students the purpose behind what they were doing, the reason for reading a text, for example. She incorporated transparency where appropriate. In the same literacy course, she grew to value the importance of questions and to model asking “tough questions.” During her lessons she encouraged the students to ask many questions and, at times, remembered feeling, "OK. This is exhausted." Having been told about the importance of

modelling in the first literacy course, Gillian incorporated it into her teaching until she noticed that the students, wanting to please her “would write how I write. So I stopped doing that,” she said. She felt that the reading methods class “was almost like you just assumed every kid already liked to read” and the focus was on what and how you used the resources. Although, she admitted that, “to have a teacher (instructor) that was so motivated and so enthusiastic is definitely, in itself, very inspiring, really important to see.” However, the course did not provide her with “strategies that she could use to motivate uninterested students” in her practicum class. Gillian said that the two literacy classes she took in university made her realize how powerful reading aloud could be. She incorporated it into her teaching during practicum and “couldn’t believe the attention that they (students) gave (her) and the respect, while she read a book, was huge.”

When reflecting on how well the reading processes coursework prepared her for practicum, Gillian said, “I think that if I had gone into a class and I was told to teach a kid how to read, I don’t know if I would have been prepared for that.” In the course “there was little attention to struggling readers, and the way to solve problems was always to motivate them” through better resources. Gillian had difficulty accepting this solution and, during practicum, she noticed that it “worked for lots of kids in (her) class, but there was one girl in particular that it didn’t matter what you gave to her, she wasn’t going to read that day.” So, in this way, Gillian did not feel the course prepared her to reach all students. During practicum, she only supported “in small chunks,” and individually, a student who was struggling to read. Gillian said, “It was very like... listen, give them an opportunity and be patient; then if they were really struggling... like... helping them break down a word type of thing.” She did not feel she could have done the

same in a group situation. “I had a really capable class of readers already so I lucked out in that way,” she chuckled.

Influence of practicum on understanding of how to teach early reading. Gillian

indicated that the most important part of her preparation was the practicum:

... because up until that point, everything had been so theoretical, and we were doing everything without the kids there. And so we were learning all these theories and learning from other classrooms and seeing videos from other classrooms. And talking about all these strategies and how they've been proven, and all this sort of stuff.

The reading processes course often made Gillian feel “really detached” and “really defensive.” She had a sense that she “had to advocate for kids that weren't there. Because then you go to the classroom and you're just like, ‘Oh, yeah. This is why you do this.’” During her practicum, she found it very inspiring to “see kids get really excited about reading” and “how powerful some of the students felt because they could read.” Thinking of how much she had “hated silent reading” she was surprised that silent reading could be a “nice, quiet, safe moment. Not that reading needs to be quiet,” she said, “but I really saw the value of why you take time to have kids read on their own.” She also thought it was interesting to see the variety of books “out there” and the variety of readers, “how some kids, would get through a novel every two weeks, but others would read the same picture book every time.” During the course, she described her childhood experience of learning to read and then saw it “in action during practicum, saying:

I felt like you're walking uphill and then all of a sudden you're going downhill. It's like you're bushwhacking, almost, and you don't know why, where you're going and all of a sudden you're lost and you're confused and things are hitting you in the face. And you know that there's a place you need to get to. And then, all of a sudden, partway along you meet someone that needs your help, or something. And then you kind of have someone that you're guiding through the bushes now. And it provides more purpose to why you're getting smacked in the face.

Current beliefs about teaching early reading.

Gillian still believed that “not every kid loves to read” and did not think that she would change her mind on this. She supposed it was because she “was an out of norm kid and (she) just (wanted) someone to advocate for them.” Gillian had grown to appreciate the “value of providing kids with time to read on their own.” This surprised her because of how much she used to dislike silent reading as a young student. She now understood that picture books were a very effective way to ease into discussing difficult topics (e.g., residential schools). She stated, “Picture books can be launch pads and make the subjects really safe. I never really thought about that before. It just reignited, I guess, value in literature. And like, how that can be a safe place for the teacher too.”

Gillian had always believed that “kids can be mean” and that you should not “have students you know are struggling read aloud.” However, during her practicum, she noticed that if the teacher created a safe space “asking struggling readers to read aloud, they were OK with it. Like they were all patient and waiting for the kid to stammer out a sentence.” Another understanding developed through practicum was the importance of allowing kids the opportunity to know themselves as readers and what the right book for them was, without intervening too quickly. She observed:

Letting them try to read a harder book, and waiting for them to learn that they need a different book, instead of just handing them a Level 4. I just thought you were protecting them by not giving them the Level 6 book when you knew they were Level 3. The kids are hardier than that.

Gillian highlighted a few gaps in her preparation. She said, “I don't know how to teach a kid how to read. Wouldn't know how to start.” Gillian would have felt more prepared if she knew how to do a running record and how to teach sight words, for example. She wanted more step-by-step instruction in how the process happened, such as “you start with the alphabet and you

learn how to sound words out.” She said, “I don't know. We didn't do any of that... um... it was very much focused on that relationship building, which is important.” While “being patient and respectful and being compassionate was really emphasized in (the) program,” Gillian felt she did not possess “tangible skills to teach a kid how to read.” She also did not feel that the course provided her with strategies to motivate disinterested and struggling readers. Gillian wanted to have been taught on “how to talk to a child about why reading is important.” She stated:

I don't just want to tell them it's important because... like... every job you do in the future will be related to, that you'll have to be able to read. Or that reading is something that we can find pleasure in, those are really stock answers. I want to be able to really help a child understand why reading is important.

Overall, Gillian still believed that modelling excitement for reading was not enough to motivate all students to want to read. She deeply valued her practicum experience because it made theory from coursework visible, while confirming her belief that not all students loved to read.

Summary

For ease of reference of pertinent information shared in the detailed description of the three individual cases, Table 4.7 offers a summary of each participant’s early literacy experiences at home and at school. Moreover, their understanding and attitude towards teaching reading before and after participation in a reading course and practicum in a primary class are also outlined.

Table 4.7

Case Studies: Biography, Attitudes, and Understandings

Participant	Early literacy experiences at home	Literacy experiences at school	Understandings about teaching reading – before reading course and practicum	Understandings about teaching reading – after reading course and practicum	Attitude and metaphors about teaching reading
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Sara	Cannot remember learning to read	More vivid memories of learning to write and spell	Does not know how children learn to read	Has a “tiny bit idea” how to teach reading	Excited about motivating students to be as excited about reading as she was
	“bookworm”	Reading from overhead projector and answering questions	Supposes it starts with knowing letters and letter combinations and sounds	Importance of starting with the alphabet, knowing letters before words, sounding out and visualizing them on paper	Anxious about not being able to understand why a student can’t learn
	Could read in kindergarten		Important to be able to read and sound out silently in your head		
	Nurturing home literacy environment	Self-conscious about reading aloud		Understands the importance of repeated readings and memorization	Teaching reading is...complex.
	Regular trips to the library	Favourite memory: being read to by the elementary school librarian	Important to understand reading-writing connection – we read what is written	Strong readers read at home; struggling readers do not	“Words are complex, and language is complex, and understanding
		Comply/defy relationship with “forced” reading in school	Teaching reading in kindergarten-read aloud to students and let students repeat the text	Teaching reading is very complex	all of those things for the first time is a really big feat.”
		Liked choice in book selection		To motivate students to read a teacher needs to model excitement for books and reading	
		Disliked reading books she could not comprehend or connect to	Reading is an individual learning process and takes a lot of teacher time		
			Students are at different stages of development	Make learning to read fun	
			Important to have texts at their reading level	Older students also enjoy being read to	
			Important to have texts that they are interested in	Important to provide opportunities for students to read as much as possible in all subjects	
				Important to have texts that students	

			Constant encouragement is needed to motivate students to improve	are interested in and at their reading level Need to be mindful of messages in text selection (e.g., gender stereotypes) Learning to read is more dependent on the attitude and confidence of the student than the teacher	
Participant	Early literacy experiences at home	Literacy experiences at school	Understandings about teaching reading – before reading course and practicum	Understandings about teaching reading – after reading course and practicum	Attitude and metaphors about teaching reading
Marsha	Cannot remember learning to read Thinks she learned to read in grade 1 Younger sister struggled to learn Very supportive home environment Parents read to her, she	School used similar methods to home to teach her to read Lots of phonics and letter forming worksheets Fond memories of “super fun activities in grade 1” unrelated to reading Didn’t mind spelling tests because her parents would drill her all week Disliked activities involving phonics and grammar – not taught in context	Understanding influenced from how her parents taught her Teaching reading is a one-to-one activity Need to read books at appropriate reading level Rereading or reading easier books is fun but has no learning value When teaching young children important to correct as soon as	Unsure about the teaching students how to learn to read from the very beginning Students learn in different ways some by rote and others through creative exploration Students learn much more from a book than just print (e.g., facial expressions, body language) Abundance of good books and resources to use to	Excited about... making reading interesting and relevant to what they enjoy in their daily lives outside of school Anxious about...not being able to teach all her students to read at the appropriate level for their grade Teaching reading is...

followed along	Most reading tasks in middle years related to content comprehension	they make a mistake	motivate and engage students	organized chaos. "It's an adventure, you don't really know where they're (students) going to go or where you're going to go and it's sort of what needs to happen in the moment a lot of the time and then sometimes you have a plan and sometimes you don't so yes, it's kind of chaotic, in a good way
Parents listen to her read, ask her to sound out difficult words and explain meaning of unknown words	Saw reading independently and being read to as separate from learning to read	Normal progression in learning to read is: learn the letters, then the letter-sound combination, next are words, then sentences	Fluency is an integral part of learning to read	
Parents helped daily with school work	Enjoyed being given choice of books (from a list) for the first time in grade 10	Children are curious so it's important to give them books they are interested in and they will put forth the effort	Emphasize fluency rather than prompting for accurate reading	
Parents selected books for her to read until late in elementary school		Being patient and not making the child feel they are not doing a good job	Provide students with texts they are interested in	
		Technology engages and makes reading fun	Give students meaningful work to do relevant to what they care about	
		Technology helps students be more self-directed and require less teacher time	Learning to read will happen anyway because text is all around us	
		Encourage students to bring what they are interested into class	Learning to read is just practice and visual memorization because English is an odd language (e.g., write/right)	
		Not all students will love reading as much as she did	Value in allowing students to choose what they want to read	
		Teacher will choose most of the	Being read to is a learning experience (e.g., pre, during and after reading activities)	

			books that students read		
			Use different forms of media (e.g., video games) rather than just print books to motivate reading		
			Being read to as a just enjoyable and a treat		
Participant	Early literacy experiences at home	Literacy experiences at school	Understandings about teaching reading – before reading course and practicum	Understandings about teaching reading – after reading course and practicum	Attitude and metaphors about teaching reading
Gillian	<p>Struggled learning to read</p> <p>Does not have strong memories about books and reading</p> <p>Books available at home</p> <p>Parents read to her</p> <p>Siblings excelled in school</p> <p>Felt pressure to learn</p> <p>Rarely did homework – out playing</p>	<p>Diagnosed with LD in grade 1</p> <p>Speech pathologist support for a speech impediment</p> <p>Reading instruction in learning support room</p> <p>Enjoyed going up to grade 6 because she went with two friends</p> <p>Lots of phonics and sight word worksheets</p> <p>Difficulty sounding out words and learned by recognizing words</p> <p>Did fake reading and memorized</p>	<p>All students are different</p> <p>Not every student loves to read</p> <p>Learning to read happens through phonics and memorization of words</p> <p>Need to understand what motivates each student to read</p> <p>Learning to read requires the right kind of practice</p> <p>Need to access all the ways in which students learn</p>	<p>Focus of teaching reading needs to be on fluency and comprehension</p> <p>Not every student loves to read</p> <p>Teacher enthusiasm for reading is not enough to motivate every student</p> <p>Picture books ease discussion of difficult topics</p> <p>Not all books need to be read for a message</p> <p>Teaching needs to focus on individual and not gender differences</p>	<p>Excited about... watching students put words together to create interesting sentences, express their ideas in original ways</p> <p>Anxious about... teaching reading when she herself has so much struggle with her “own reading and pronouncing words</p> <p>Teaching reading is... like pollinating;</p>

sports instead	from hearing others read	Teaching reading needs to be personalized	Choral reading is not a good practice	You need to try...you need to visit a lot of flowers before you figure it out
Parents resistant to LD diagnosis and not too involved in her schooling	Did minimum reading required to complete work Motivated to read Harry Potter through influence of friends	Students should read what they want and at their pace Students learn best from their peers	Pairing good and struggling readers is not a good strategy Reading aloud is appropriate with middle grade students not just primary	
Did not read outside of school	Torture to sit during silent reading time Developed stigma towards going to reading support room and refused to go after grade 7 Currently feels resentment to how she was treated by the school system Feels she learned in an environment that was not the best for her needs	Use reading outdoors to engage students	Important to communicate purpose for learning to students There's value in allowing time for students to read on their own	

The information displayed in the above table reveals that Sara and Marsha were precocious readers who had very supportive home environments. All three participants had access to books at home and were read to by their parents. Gillian had struggled with learning to read. In their early schooling, all participants reported an emphasis on phonics work in learning to read. Sara and Marsha liked activities that allowed for choice and independence, and expressed a dislike of being 'forced' to read material that they considered irrelevant. Gillian developed coping strategies (e.g., fake reading, reading just headings, memorization) to meet minimum school requirements. Participants' initial understanding of how children learned to read was that it

followed a “normal progression” that started with learning alphabet letters and their sounds, then learned to sound out words, followed by reading sentences. They showed understanding that all learners do not develop at the same rate and, as a result, there would be variance in the stages of development of the students they would teach. Participants believed in the importance of finding texts that matched students’ abilities and interests to motivate reading. They all acknowledged that because of the integration of recent technology, their future students would have different experiences growing up than the participants had.

After the reading course, participants expressed that they still felt unprepared to teach the very first steps of learning to read. They now understood that there needed to be a greater focus on promoting fluency and comprehension instead of on promoting accuracy in reading. Participants also learned that teachers reading aloud was not limited to younger grades and that it was a very enjoyable experience for everyone. They expressed a deeper understanding of the importance of modelling enthusiasm for reading to their students. After practicum, participants expressed having a “bit more of an idea”, but still felt unprepared to teach the first stages of learning to read. They were now aware that reading was a very complex process and still thought that starting with letter-sound work would benefit all students. Participants believed in the importance of making learning to read fun.

Chapter Summary

In chapter four, I outlined the open coding process used to analyze all data sources. I completed two cycles of coding that guided the categories used in the case description of the reading course and of the three participants. I presented biographical information on the instructor and a detailed description of how the instructor designed the course to provide the reader with a sense of the person and the context facilitating PSTs understanding of reading pedagogy. The reading course emphasized the importance of promoting student engagement

through the planning of fun activities, text selection, and teacher modelling of excitement towards reading and books. The instructor also highlighted the use of a balanced approach to teaching reading with an emphasis on the promotion of fluency and comprehension rather than on accurate reading. The three participants expressed positive feelings toward their participation in the reading course. Even though they admitted to having a few more strategies to teach reading after the course, they also indicated still not feeling confident to teach early reading. The participants felt that their practicum provided a better learning opportunity than reading coursework because they were able to see and learn from the application of the theory to which they were exposed to in their university reading course.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the themes that have emerged from analysis of the study findings outlined in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I will also discuss the implications of the research findings, as well as the strengths and limitations of the current study, and provide recommendations for further research, preservice teacher educators and preservice literacy teacher education.

CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

There are many factors that can impact preservice teachers' initial understanding of how to teach reading including early experiences in learning to read, at home and at school. As we saw in Chapter Four, the three participants had similarities and variations in their biographical histories which influenced their understanding of reading pedagogy. During their teacher preparation program, preservice teachers had the opportunity to interact with a course on reading pedagogy and, during practicum, teach reading in a primary classroom. In this study my intent was to investigate what an examination of the PSTs biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and in practicum revealed about the development of their understanding of how to teach reading.

In this cross-case analysis, I discuss four themes as follows: (1) preservice teachers' biographies and their influence on their understanding of reading pedagogy; (2) the inspiration and influence of the course instructor on three preservice teachers; (3) preservice teachers' initial beliefs and how these beliefs acted as filters during their preservice teacher preparation; and, (4) the ways in which the preservice teachers valued their learning from practicum over learning from university coursework. After each theme there is a discussion of its relationship to the research literature. This section is followed by a summary exploring how the cross-case findings relate to the study's research question: What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading? I end the chapter with a discussion of the implications, the limitations of the study, and research recommendations. The

recommendations fall into three areas: preservice literacy educators, preservice literacy programs, and further research.

Theme # 1: Preservice Teachers' Biographies Influence their Understanding of Reading Pedagogy

Preservice teachers' biographies influenced their understanding of reading pedagogy. Their reading identity was initiated at home where they remembered particular books and the presence of books in the home, as well routines such as being read to at bedtime or observing their parents reading. Sara and Marsha recalled parents modelling regular reading habits; Gillian did not see her parents read regularly, but claimed that she "knew they did." Sara and Marsha had strong memories of books they had enjoyed as children; Gillian had no memory or strong connections with books from her past. Gillian's struggles in learning to read did not allow her to be part of her siblings' reading 'team' since they excelled in reading and read all the time. Feeling the "pressure" to learn to read and not succeeding, Gillian started school identifying as a non-reader, someone who disliked books, and someone who was sporty, but not academic. On the other hand, Sara and Marsha were precocious readers who started school already feeling competent as readers, with positive routines around books and reading.

Each participant's ability to recall details of how they learned to read appeared linked to how difficult or how easy that process had been for them. Marsha and Sara who learned to read easily, had vague memories of how they learned. Gillian, on the other hand, had vivid memories which she attributed to her struggles in learning to read. She also perceived that it took her longer than other children to learn to read. All three participants spoke of a phonetic approach being used in their early schooling and also spoke of instructional approaches such as round robin reading, read-alouds by their teacher and librarian, silent reading, and buddy reading. Consistent

with what they recalled of their own experiences, the participants assumed that learning to read started with learning letters and their sounds and then blending them to read words and later sentences. Gillian, “aware of how she had learned words visually” thought it was important to make visual associations with letters, sounds, words, and pictures when teaching children to read. The participants also indicated the importance of reading to students while they followed along. Marsha believed that, as her parents had done to her, errors in reading needed to be corrected as they happened.

The evidence presented in Chapter 4 suggests that what the participants valued and had enjoyed in their own schooling was connected with the teaching approaches they wanted to use and the goals they had for their students. The participants varied in what they enjoyed and disliked about learning to read in their early schooling. Marsha and Sara had disliked being “forced” to read school assigned readings. They appreciated the few times they were given a choice in book selection and read material that had relevance and connection. Gillian had found most of her schooling boring and “dull.” Most of the memories of her enjoyment in school was related to spending time with friends both in the resource room and in the school yard. She had also enjoyed the connection with a couple of books recommended by her friends. Similar to what they had valued in their own schooling, the participants indicated the importance of relevance, interest, and choice as motivators for students to read. Sara and Marsha loved books and reading, and wanted their students to share this same excitement when they taught reading. Gillian felt that her struggles with learning to read had led to her being more empathic toward learners who find literacy learning challenging. At the same time, she was concerned that her own struggles may not make her the best role model for students. Nonetheless, it did make her more interested in learning about personalized teaching approaches that took into consideration how children

learn differently and how important it is for the teacher to “access all the ways they need to learn to read” so they could provide students with the “right kind of practice” and “specific feedback.” Gillian had “hated” silent reading and therefore, wanted her students to have more “interactive reading” opportunities with peers and to take them to read outside; she imagined her students would share her love for the outdoors. She had fond memories of her time in the resource room where she sat in pods of three with friends. Interestingly, Gillian indicated wanting to have her students sit in pods and “definitely not in rows.” The few times that Gillian had been motivated to read was because of the influence of her friends. In her teaching, Gillian planned to include many opportunities for students to learn from each other. Each participant indicated being aware that students would be at different stages of development and that would require a great deal of teacher time and attention. Addressing student diversity was a challenge mentioned by all participants. Each participant’s memories about their nurturing home environments influenced how they perceived their future students. All participants believed today’s students to have many different experiences around books and reading than they had as children due to technology. They believed students today to be technologically-savvy, but not necessarily readers of printed text and they perceived this as a disadvantage. Marsha and Sara who strongly valued their identity as lovers of books and reading, connected reading through electronic media as not as enjoyable: “They are not reading for escape and enjoyment and are reading for social connection” and a “means to an end.”

Discussion

The participants’ biographies reveal a potential impact on their reading pedagogical beliefs which aligns with Applegate et al. (2014) and Boggs and Golden’s (2009) assertion that families play a critical role in preservice teachers’ attitudes towards reading and that interactions

with parents and siblings have an impact in what they feel and believe. Sara and Marsha described very nurturing home environments that they perceived to have contributed to their love of reading. Gillian also described a home environment that promoted reading: her parents read to her and there were books around the house; her siblings were avid readers. Family interactions and family positioning can contribute to shaping reading identity. In Gillian's case, her struggles with reading likely contributed to her expressing an identity as someone who did not like reading. This identity showed up in her adult years and made her question her capacity to teach reading to children. Additionally, unlike the parents of the other two participants, Gillian's parents were not very involved in supporting her school work at home. Parental involvement in children's reading activities has an impact on their reading motivation and achievement (Harris, 2018; Klauda, 2009; Senechal & Young, 2008).

The PSTs' early experiences also influenced the way they envisaged their future students and the goals they had for them. The findings support Necla (2016) and Larrañaga and Yubero's (2005) conclusions that the values that PSTs hold dear from their biographical experiences are the values that they want to pass on to their students. These initial beliefs may be incongruent with what teacher educators hope their students will learn (Bryan, 2012). Al-Hazza (2017) suggested that if PSTs do not have an opportunity to revise these beliefs, they function as "default options" that can be problematic and potential sources of tension for new teachers who are expected to use approaches congruent with learning to read in the 21st century. When projecting the approaches that they will use to facilitate reading development for others, they include approaches that they had enjoyed as students as well as elements that they wished had been part of their own schooling, and of their own learning journey. As an example, Marsha indicated that she enjoyed the following activities as a child and therefore used them in her own

teaching: (1) teach a unit on plants because she enjoyed gardening; and, (2) using different-sized containers to measure rice to teach about volume. These processes echo Debreli (2016) and Smagorisky and Barnes' (2014) findings, which indicated that the main influence on new teachers' instructional decisions and planning of learning experiences in their classrooms was what they had enjoyed, or had not enjoyed, as students.

Theme #2. Course Instructor's Passion and Practical Advice Inspires Preservice Teachers

Largely the participants spoke very favorably of the course and the instructor indicating that she inspired them through her passion and her emphasis on practical ideas about reading pedagogy. They highlighted three aspects of the reading processes course that had led to their engagement in the course: (1) the instructor's passion for books and reading; (2) the instructor's credibility (due to her recent and lengthy experience in the classroom); and, (3) the teaching approaches the instructor used and advocated for classroom practice.

First, the participants identified the instructor's tangible passion for books and reading as the strongest influence from the course on their teaching during practicum. Gillian found it inspiring to see the instructor still act so excited about teaching reading even after the many years she had worked as an elementary teacher. The instructor modelled that passion especially when reading aloud to the class. All participants had the opportunity to experience what it felt like, as an adult, to listen to someone reading aloud. For Sara it was a "point in the day where you (got) to lighten up." Gillian indicated that before this course, reading aloud was not something "she had in her toolbox" because she had not realized the power of reading aloud until she experienced it in the two literacy courses at university. The participants understood that reading aloud was appropriate for and enjoyed by students of all ages and not only appropriate for early primary students, as they had initially believed. As a result, they felt energized to plan for

reading aloud opportunities with their students during practicum. The instructor advocated that teachers needed to model passion for books and reading in order to motivate all students to read. Both Sara and Marsha agreed. Sara felt that her instructor's animated face and words when talking about learning to read was contagious. Sara described the instructor as having been "adamant" that teachers needed to make reading fun, exciting, and engaging. Both Sara and Marsha mentioned that "fun" was a strong consideration in their planning during practicum. Gillian challenged the instructor's assertion that reading needed to always be fun. However, after practicum, Gillian's attitude seemed to have shifted and she even expressed being excited about some of the books she had used. The participants understood that text selection was an important consideration to increase student motivation to read. In order to model excitement for reading, the PSTs understood that they needed to choose texts that not only connected with students but texts that they could connect with as well. The noticeable effort that the instructor put into selecting books that could serve as launch pads to meaningful discussions and cross-curricular connections made the PSTs aware of the care they needed to put into their book selection and motivated them to continue to add titles to their repertoire. Before the course, Gillian had not realized the power of picture books and how they could be used in multiple ways to engage learners especially in the primary grades.

Secondly, the instructor engaged her students by sharing her own experiences and stories about teaching children to read, as well as sharing rich resources from her own classroom which built credibility in the eyes of the participants. The instructor had collected many samples of students' work as well as lessons she had used effectively with her students. The instructor designed the course in a way that made the participants see the environment more like a real-classroom. Overall, she wanted students to have a good repertoire of books and "fun and

exciting” activities to accompany them that would engage all students into reading. The participants were pleased with the choice of textbook. They admitted to not having completed all of the assigned readings, nonetheless they saw the textbook as very useful because it provided practical lessons ideas that focused on opportunities for learner practice and increased the likelihood of high engagement. Gillian felt that unlike some other textbooks in her preparation program, Allington and Cunningham’s book offered suggestions that were easy to implement in the classroom.

Finally, the participants indicated feeling positively toward some of the instructional choices used by the instructor to facilitate their learning about reading pedagogy. All participants were surprised by the abundance of resources that were available to them to teach reading and had learned about activities to connect the learners to books. The three preservice teachers also valued the instructor’s emphasis on collaboration during the course. The instructor incorporated many opportunities for the PSTs to discuss their ideas with peers several times during class and designed activities and assignments that required them to work together and to share their work with classmates. Marsha mentioned that listening to her classmates’ variety of reading interests made her more aware of the need to include a variety of genres in her teaching. Listening to her classmates’ feelings and attitudes toward reading, also made Marsha sensitive to the needs of struggling readers and the importance of making some activities in her class voluntary. Gillian also appreciated the collaborative process built into the course. She mentioned that collaborating with her classmates “showed her better ways of doing certain things” and she was inspired by the creative ways in which her classmates designed learning opportunities to teach reading and felt empowered with the quantity and diversity of resources.

Discussion

The instructor's modelling of passion for books and reading was highlighted by the PSTs to have been the strongest influence of the reading processes course. Passionate teachers create excitement that influences learning and encourages PSTs to act (Palmer, 2017; Vallerand, 2007). The PSTs indicated feeling inspired by the instructor's passion and feeling motivated to find literature in order to model and recreate those joyful experiences with their own students. Through participation in the reading processes course, the PSTs in this study changed their understanding and beliefs about reading aloud to their students. Findings indicated that the change resulted from regularly watching the instructor model the activity to them while they experienced the activity as students. Through their own response to being read aloud by the instructor they understood how it could be a powerful activity to incorporate into their own teaching. The findings echo Risko et al. (2008) study which indicated that coursework could impact PSTs beliefs when the instructor deliberately planned for opportunities for modelling and demonstrating learning with guided practice in the application of specific course content. Gillian's resistance to the instructor's assertion that reading was fun, which contradicted her personal experience, echoed Al-Hazza's (2017) finding that PSTs' past learning experiences influenced how they thought, acted, and interpreted information during their preparation. The finding that Gillian at the end of her preparation had "softened" her position, corroborated Pop's (2015) assertion that PSTs needed time to make new knowledge their own. The instructor designed the course to make it applicable to a real teaching situation, in part by using actual lessons and samples of student work. Anderson (2012) suggested that PSTs wanted and expected to receive from their university preparation practical skills and information for immediate classroom application. The instructor used a social-constructivist approach to teaching with

frequent embedded opportunities for discussion and peer collaboration around meaningful tasks. PSTs mentioned that these occasions contributed to a reframing or expansion in their thinking which is corroborated by Tilson et al., (2017) who argued that providing opportunities for PSTs to reflect on and discuss dissonance between their personal theories and those of others allowed for the reframing and/or expanding of their thinking.

Theme # 3- Preservice Teachers' Initial Beliefs act as Filters during Their Preparation

As one would expect, the participants had varying interpretations and assessments of the course. Their biographies influenced the two main lenses (ways) with which the PSTs interpreted information during their preparation. They were the PSTs': (1) interests and expectations; and, (2) beliefs and feelings towards reading and teaching reading.

The participants' interest in teaching primary grades and in undertaking their practicum placement in a primary classroom served as a lens through which they interpreted the information in the course. Then, at the end of the course, it served as a filter to evaluate the effectiveness of the course based on how well it had prepared them to teach in a primary classroom. The participants felt that although they knew "a bit more" about early reading, the course had not met their expectations as they still did not feel confident in their knowledge to teach primary children to read. The participants' thoughts were reflected in Sara's words that "the course had just skimmed the surface." Their identity as readers developed as result of their prior experiences with learning to read. Sara and Marsha started the course feeling competent as readers and therefore excited about the opportunity to become teachers of reading. As it had been for them, they perceived the process of learning to read as an easy process. Marsha's words reflect the false confidence with which they approached their preparation: "If I know how to read I know how to teach reading." Therefore, much of their interaction with course content was

focused on learning strategies to make their students love reading as much as they had. In contrast, Gillian started the course identifying as a struggling reader and doubting her ability to be an effective teacher of reading. Consequently, she was hoping for a great deal more step-by-step instruction about teaching reading to young children. She reasoned that the course was not able to provide her with the detailed information she needed to teach the “first stages of learning to read” because it had a stronger focus on teaching reading to middle grades. Gillian insightfully remarked that for those classmates that were interested in teaching middle grades, perhaps they had felt differently and perceived the course as having a greater focus on primary grades. Given her experiences as a struggling reader, and not seeing her experience reflected in the content of the course, she adopted the stance of advocate for those students that, like her, had not enjoyed and had struggled with reading. She said, “I was an out of norm kid and I just wanted someone to advocate for them.” The role she took as an advocate for struggling readers contributed to how she filtered the content and messages in the course. Gillian shared that the course had prepared PSTs to teach reading to students who do not struggle with learning to read and had failed to address her need for information and strategies on how to specifically teach reading to students who are challenged in learning to read. In this way teaching reading would be more mindful of *all* learners.

The participants’ interpretations of course content were also associated with the beliefs and emotions they associated with reading and learning how to read with which they entered their teacher preparation. The participants focussed on the content that connected more directly with areas they had questions about or issues on which they had already developed personal theories. Often, they said, “I already knew that but had not realized...” They actively focussed on the content that helped to contextualize some of their experiences as having academic merit.

When highlighting what she considered to have been influences of the course on her understanding about reading pedagogy, Sara mentioned the importance of repeated readings in building confidence and fluency. She said, “I remember doing that when I was learning to read; I thought I was just memorizing.” She also highlighted the importance of matching text level to a reader’s reading level. She said, “I remember when I was in school the only time where I quickly shut down was when I was given texts that were too hard for me.” Marsha also selected fluency and repeated readings of the same text as the most important understandings from the course. Those two aspects connected directly to her initial understanding from her own experiences in learning to read with her parents. From that experience, she had understood that miscues needed to be corrected immediately; but now, after participation in the course, she realized that it was more effective to focus on fluency rather than interrupt students’ reading to correct every error. As for repeated readings, she had not realized that it had academic value as a pre-reading stage. When rationalizing their learning in the course, the participants often referred to their own experiences to justify their support or disagreement. While Marsha had not enjoyed doing spelling tests she had been very successful and felt that preparing for them had contributed to increasing her vocabulary and comprehension. Therefore, she disagreed with the course message that spelling tests did not contribute to increasing comprehension. Sara and Gillian concerned themselves with fairness in addressing gender issues. Gillian expressed strong disagreement with messages about gender differences in learning and Sara with activities she perceived to promote gender stereotyping. Sara also disagreed with suggestions to include activities that she felt were “outside of her comfort zone.”

Together with their entering interests, expectations, and beliefs, the participants also resisted pedagogical values that contradicted what they had experienced in their journey in

learning to read. Gillian had very strong emotions about reading and learning to read. As a student diagnosed with a Learning Disability, she had experienced stigma and had many negative associations with reading. She presented the strongest resistance to the course's main message that reading was fun and that all students would love reading and be motivated to read if the teacher modeled passion for reading. Her own feelings and experiences contradicted the instructor's assertion. As "proof" that not all students loved to read and had memories of favourite books, she gave the example of not being able to identify a book that had been significant in her childhood for a class assignment. Gillian admitted that her participation in the course had made her realize how some activities in teaching reading could contribute to making reading fun for her students. However, she maintained that the course had not changed her belief that an exciting teacher and motivating resources were not enough to motivate *all* students to read.

During their practica, it is likely that dissonance resulting from contradicting evidence from the PSTs' observation of their students' behaviour contributed to a reframing of the PSTs' feelings and beliefs about reading pedagogy. For example, Sara had strongly disliked round robin reading when she was young and did not want to include it in her teaching; she especially thought it would be a negative experience for struggling readers. Observing her mentor teacher do round robin reading with the class, Sara "was surprised that the students seemed to actually like it" and struggling readers did not seem to be negatively impacted by the activity. As a result of this superficial observation, Sara was open to incorporating into her teaching an outmoded practice of calling on students to read orally one after the other; a practice that a large body of research deems to be ineffective (Kuhn, 2014). Practicum was also very influential on Gillian's initial beliefs. As someone who had not enjoyed reading and had "hated" silent reading, she

indicated it had been “inspiring” to see “kids get really excited about reading” and had realized that “silent reading could be a safe place” for some students. Another finding from this study was that practicum served as an opportunity for the PSTs to formulate “theories” about teaching reading, again, based on the observations of their students. As a result of her practicum experience, Sara understood that competent “readers in the class read at home” and struggling readers in the class did not. She concluded that parental involvement was essential to students’ success in reading. Overall, the participants indicated that there had not been anything “transformational” in their thinking as a result of their preparation. They indicated that much of their learning was in addition to what they already knew and believed from their prior experiences. However, their perception is contradicted by the language they used when articulating their understanding of reading pedagogy as a result of participation in a reading processes course and practicum. The participants repeatedly used a variation of “I used to think this... but now...” It appeared that there was more influence from their preparation on their understanding of reading pedagogy than they acknowledged.

Discussion

The findings on how preservice teachers’ lenses (i.e., experiences, interests, expectations, beliefs, and feelings) acted as filters during their preparation validate the social cultural view that learning is subjective and contextual (Boggs & Golden, 2009). Preservice teachers were exposed to the same content during their preparation but, like all learners, their lenses influenced the development of an individual understanding of reading pedagogy. McGlynn-Stewart’s (2016) findings corroborate the strong impact of prior experiences with literacy on PSTs’ expectations, attitudes toward, and perceived effectiveness of a literacy course. “I block out stuff that I don’t think is (...) good, or that I’m gonna use.” Marsha’s words are a good illustration of the findings

on the processes that the PSTs used to make sense of content they interacted with during their preparation. The dynamic of acceptance and rejection of information seemed to indicate that PSTs frames of reference determine how they interpret and how much knowledge they acquire from their preparation (Kagan, 1992; Simon, 2012). Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) also suggested the strong emotional significance that PSTs attached to their schooling experiences and as a result, frames of reference were difficult to change (Massey, 2001). The analysis of the findings for this theme corroborated the findings in the previous theme: the importance of frequent opportunities for the teacher educator and PSTs to listen to classmates' personal histories and how they are making sense of new information in light of their prior beliefs. Listening to experiences, understandings, attitudes, and feelings that differ from their own, supports PSTs in being more open in their perspectives and to incorporate flexibility in their own teaching to encourage and address a variety of perspectives, such as attitudes toward reading, in their own students. The findings echo Hurst, Wallace and Nixon's (2013) work, which suggested many benefits of peer collaboration and discussion, such as learning multiple insights, different perspectives and talents, as well as gaining inspiration, confidence, and personal validation. Similar to findings in Kist and Pytash (2015) and Wall (2016), preservice teachers in this study tended to be strongly influenced by course content that legitimized their existing frames of reference. When it came to making sense of their personal theories during practicum, the participants were much less resistant to changing their beliefs if they were contradicted by observation of their students' behaviour. The findings mirror Linek et al.'s (2006) work suggesting that dissonance provided by practicum experiences which contradict previously held beliefs acted as a "trigger" for PSTs to critically examine their beliefs.

Theme # 4: Preservice Teachers Value Practicum over University Reading Coursework as a Source of Knowledge

The participants considered their practicum experience as more valuable for their learning in becoming a teacher of reading than their reading processes coursework. Preservice teachers identified three main reasons for privileging practicum in their preparation. Practicum had provided opportunities to: (1) observe students' responses to teaching strategies and approaches; (2) see the application of theory; and, (3) revise their understanding of reading pedagogy.

The credibility and passion of the reading processes course instructor had been a source of inspiration for participants to create joyful opportunities for their students during practicum. The participants felt prepared having collected many suggestions of books and accompanying activities to engage their students in reading. Although they acknowledged having been inspired and influenced by messages about reading pedagogy during coursework, preservice teachers felt that the start of practicum signaled the beginning of the "real learning" and the opportunity to see "what this (course learning) all looks like" (Sara).

Firstly, during practicum, the participants had the opportunity to observe the impact of teaching strategies and approaches on students' behaviour and learning. From these observations, the participants generated theories about effective and ineffective approaches and strategies in promoting student learning. Next, are a few examples of how the participants made sense of students' behaviour and developed understanding about teaching reading. Sara observed students struggle during silent reading and she surmised that it was because they did not have enough variety of books. She indicated that this had been a "huge thing" for her to understand - that students are motivated by variety and novelty of the books, and as a result, she believed that

teachers should make new books available to students regularly. From observing patterns in her students' reading behaviour (based on the class' home reading program), Sara understood that strong readers read daily at home and struggling readers did not. As a result, Sara felt strongly that parents needed to be involved in supporting their child's literacy development. During coursework, Marsha had been introduced to word walls as a strategy to support students' vocabulary and spelling. She had been skeptical about students' interest and engagement with the strategy. Through observing how her students responded so positively to word walls she understood that it was an effective strategy to support their learning of 'sight words' (i.e., words that defy decoding patterns), and vocabulary related to the ongoing focus in the class. Gillian had expected to find more negative attitudes towards reading. Instead, she was surprised by how much excitement students showed towards books and reading. By observing her mentor teacher work with students, she understood that she could create conditions to foster excitement, such as freedom for students to select what to read, providing interesting reading resources, and supports to help students make good book choices.

Secondly, the preservice teachers were encouraged to see how their learning during coursework was applied in the practicum classroom. Gillian expressed frustration that learning to teach children during coursework had happened "without the kids there." Teaching in a real classroom helped the PSTs realize how the "theories" discussed in coursework worked for them; how what worked for one person may not work for another. Practicum allowed the PSTs to experience the complexities of teaching because, as Marsha said, "in theory everything is beautiful and streamlined and very easy." Gillian understood from her participation in the reading processes course that reading aloud was an effective strategy to incorporate into her repertoire. She credited practicum to show her how "huge" of a positive effect it had on students.

She had not thought it possible that this activity would motivate students to give her such “attention and respect.” Gillian was also very skeptical about the course’s message that exciting resources motivated students to read. During her teaching, she observed that indeed, exciting resources had motivated and excited most students. Sara found it very encouraging to see strategies that had been promoted in the reading processes course being used by students in the practicum classroom. Prior to the reading processes course, Marsha had perceived reading aloud as an enjoyable activity, but it was during the course she understood its academic value. Her experience during practicum confirmed her understanding because she saw the effect of reading aloud in promoting student motivation and learning. During coursework she was given many activities to support “getting deeper” into books. In practicum she realized how the strategies she learned in the course promoted good discussions and students deepened their understanding of the reading.

Thirdly, the participants valued the opportunity that practicum offered to learn how to teach reading through trial and error. These opportunities supported them to revise their understanding of reading pedagogy. Although Sara understood that reading was important, after practicum she believed reading to be at the centre of all learning because “reading is everywhere.” Marsha had visualized that with young students she would be the one selecting the books for them to read, such as her parents had done for her. However, she was surprised to see how well students chose books that were appropriate for them and decided that she could allow young readers the freedom to select their own books. Before practicum Marsha had decided that she would avoid having students read with each other because she thought it would be “loud and they would get silly.” During her teaching, Marsha changed her mind when she saw how much students enjoyed reading with friends and how on-task they were. Gillian especially had a

significant shift in her beliefs. In her schooling, she had hated silent reading and when envisioning her future classroom, she had indicated that she did not want to include it. Instead, she wanted to provide more interactive opportunities with students reading together. During practicum she saw the value of allowing students to read on their own and how it could be such a “nice, safe place for students.” Another strong belief Gillian had was that teachers should not ask struggling readers to read aloud as part of choral reading activities. She felt that students might feel self-conscious or vulnerable to ridicule from classmates. In practicum, she learned that it does not have to be negative. It can be a positive experience if the teacher creates a space that is safe for all students.

The participants used experiences in practicum as another lens through which they evaluated the reading processes course. Challenges the PSTs experienced in addressing the needs of their particular practicum placement were attributed to gaps in their preparation. The participants felt that the two literacy courses they had at university were some of the strongest in contributing to their learning as a teacher. Nevertheless, they felt underprepared to actually teach early reading. Sara believed that universities should offer more university preparation in early reading and place stronger requirements around PSTs volunteering in schools on a regular basis throughout their preparation. The participants had wanted more from the reading processes coursework. However, they also conceded that their experienced mentor teachers still struggled with how to support the diversity of learning needs. As a result, they felt compelled to continuously participate in professional development opportunities. “It seems like that’s something that you’re always learning how to teach it,” said Sara.

Discussion

Although not as drastic as Massey’s (2001) findings suggesting that students perceived

methods courses to be a “waste of time,” the participants in this study also valued their practicum experience over their reading coursework in supporting their understanding of reading pedagogy. This aligns with the research literature (Anderson, 2012; Britzman, 2003; Massey, 2001). Conversely, the findings contradict Brenna and Dunk’s (2018) conclusions that PSTs rated lecture and discussion in class as the main catalyst to their change in understanding. Their conclusions may be explained by the fact that in their study the instructor purposefully designed opportunities for participants to reflect on their evolving understanding during coursework. Anderson (2012) argued that participants need more practical skills prior to learning about theory. Anderson (2012) found that participants gained most of their knowledge about teaching from practice in the field or through trial and error when they entered the classroom. In the current study, practicum allowed participants many opportunities to revise their thinking. These experiences also mirror Smith et al.’s (2001) findings that practicum provided PSTs with more opportunities for conceptual change through more contact with a variety of dissonance factors which seemed to have had a strong impact on preservice teachers’ beliefs about reading pedagogy. These findings affirm Linek et al.’s (2006) assertion that it is possible to alter preservice teachers’ beliefs and support them in acquiring new understandings by providing them with opportunities to undergo a state of “disequilibrium.”

Summary

Through participant biographies, reflections on participation in a reading processes course and on practicum experiences, this study addressed the question: What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers’ ongoing understanding of how to teach reading? The main findings revealed four themes related to the ways in which the PSTs negotiated

understanding during participation in a reading processes course and a practicum placement in a primary-level classroom. The first theme indicated that preservice teachers' biographies influenced their understanding of reading pedagogy. Additionally, the findings suggested that the values that the PSTs hold dear from their biographical experiences are the values that they want to pass on to their students. Secondly, the instructor's modelling of passion for books was highlighted by the PSTs to have been the strongest influence of the reading processes course. Moreover, the PSTs credited the instructor's use of an interactive and collaborative approach to teaching, with frequent embedded opportunities for discussion and peer collaboration, to the reframing or expansion in their understanding. The third theme indicated that preservice teachers' entering expectations, beliefs, and feelings acted as filters during their preparation and contributed to the development of an individual understanding of reading pedagogy. Finally, the results indicated that the PSTs value their practicum experience over their reading coursework in supporting their understanding of reading pedagogy. For these participants, their practicum was reported to provide more opportunities for conceptual change. The participants were much less resistant to changing their beliefs if these were contradicted by observations of their students' behaviour.

Limitations of the Study

The findings from this qualitative, multi case study of three PSTs contribute to the discussion on how preservice teachers develop their understandings and beliefs about teaching young children to read. The findings support transferability, not generalizability. Those seeking to understand preservice teachers' evolving understanding of reading pedagogy are invited to consider the descriptions of the multi-cases in order to determine whether the findings and recommendations resonate with their experiences and context.

An important limitation of the study was that I did not observe the participants in the primary classrooms where they conducted their practicum and were making sense of reading pedagogy. This additional data source would likely have enabled me to more closely track their evolving beliefs and knowledge in relation to the particulars of the primary classroom contexts.

Another limitation of this study was that the participants were female, of similar ages and of similar backgrounds (e.g., educated in Canada), with limited prior experiences working with children. Only Sara had any experience working with children and this was limited to being a nanny to a four-year old for a brief amount of time. A more diverse group (e.g., age, gender, etc) may have offered more varying perspectives.

While interviewing the course instructor and the three PST participants, I made sure to prompt in open-ended, neutral ways, such as: “Can you tell me more about that?” During the interviews, I observed that the PSTs and the course instructor had a relaxed demeanour and I perceived them to be expressing their opinions freely. For example, the PSTs offered a balanced commentary on their perceptions of the positive and the negative aspects of the reading processes course. Nevertheless, it is also possible that my role as an instructor at their university may have influenced their responses in the sense that they may have perceived me as an authority figure and sought to offer answers and reflections that they thought would align with my own.

Bias is also a concern for case study researchers. My prior learning and instructional experiences and my beliefs about teaching and learning in the literacy area influenced my research focus and the research question that I asked. Also, I was influenced by the research literature that largely pointed to findings such as those that were revealed in my study. From my own personal and professional experience and from reading the literature on preservice teachers’ beliefs, I believed that PSTs started their preservice teacher preparation with strong beliefs about

reading pedagogy, that those beliefs resulted mainly from their home and schooling experiences, and that those beliefs exerted a strong influence on how PSTs developed their understanding of how reading is taught. Rather than trying to avoid bias, I strove to be transparent by explicitly articulating my experiences in chapter one and positioning in chapter three. I scrutinized the data systematically and carefully to ensure that I was sharing the diverse perspectives of the three preservice teachers and the instructor in my reporting. Throughout the data collection, analysis and synthesis processes and by triangulating the data sources, I am confident that through a focus on my research question I was able to develop insight into the participants' beliefs and understandings in relation to their biographies, practicum experiences, and the reading processes course. Next, based on the review of the literature and this study's findings, I present recommendations for teacher educators, teacher education literacy programs, and further research.

Recommendations

This study investigated the ways in which three preservice teachers developed an understanding of reading pedagogy. That evolving understanding was examined through an exploration of PSTs' prior beliefs and how they expanded these prior beliefs during literacy preparation at university and throughout practicum. Based on the findings, it appears that early literacy experiences, both at home and at school, exert a significant influence in PSTs understanding of reading pedagogy and act as filters during their university preparation. It is also clear that PSTs perceive university coursework as theoretical and value practicum as the source of real learning. Consequently, the research findings resulted in some preliminary recommendations into three areas: preservice literacy educators, preservice literacy programs, and further research.

Recommendations for teacher educators.

Educators are encouraged to design coursework that allows room for PSTs' 'stories' to be told. Such stories are based on their biographies of their learning-to-read recollections. They provide insight into significant prior beliefs that PSTs bring to their teacher preparation experiences. Corroborating findings in prior studies, this study reveals that preservice teachers' biographies can shape the expectations, questions, doubts, interests, feelings, and assumptions that they (unconsciously) use to interpret their teacher preparation experiences. Preservice literacy educators need to support PSTs to bring those prior beliefs to a conscious level. By understanding the source and nature of possible areas of alignment as well as resistance, PSTs may be more open to challenging and changing their beliefs so as to transcend their personal experiences. Such teacher education practices would encourage a reflective stance in developing instructional knowledge, competence, and beliefs. Additionally, learning strategies that prompt PSTs to consider and discuss dissonance, and affirm and resist theory, could lead to a more critical examination of their assumptions – assumptions that research reveals influence their instructional practices. By supporting PSTs to critically consider the usefulness of theory in terms of their context, preservice literacy educators will be more likely to effect PSTs' conceptual change.

Recommendations for teacher education literacy programs.

More literacy coursework. Literacy competence plays a critical role in students' academic learning. Therefore, it is critical for future teachers to develop competence in reading pedagogy. As indicated by the participants, one course was not sufficient to prepare them to become effective and confident teachers of reading. Preservice teachers need time to make new knowledge their own; to transform it and incorporate it into their highly personal pedagogies.

More focused literacy courses (e.g., a course with a focused specifically on early reading, another on readers who find learning to read challenging, etc.) would offer preservice teachers the opportunity to be more optimally prepared to address the diverse learning needs of the students they will inevitably encounter in their diverse classrooms.

Embedded/In situ learning contexts. Preservice teachers in this study perceived coursework as more theoretical and practicum as where the *real* learning took place. They described in-school learning with providing them with opportunities for dissonance which were more effective than university coursework in disrupting their beliefs. Teacher preparation programs need to create more opportunities for a closer connection between what is being taught in university courses and what preservice teachers will experience in their practicum placements. The use of an embedded/in situ model allows for closer alignment between theory and praxis. In this model for literacy preparation, instructors and PSTs are not only physically located in a local elementary school for coursework, but also engage with teachers and learners in classrooms to co-construct understandings of practice and curriculum drawing from practitioner and academic knowledge, theory, and experience (Schnellert & Kozak, 2019). Within such a model of preparation, the preservice literacy educator would be better able to more aptly address areas of dissonance as they emerge.

Solicit preservice teachers' feedback to inform teacher education program improvement. Teacher education programs need to seek and analyse program feedback from preservice teachers. That feedback could go beyond end of course feedback to include feedback collected at the end of their preparation and perhaps for two years into their teaching careers. The feedback should elicit teachers' evolving understanding of reading pedagogy, how their understanding shifts during the first/second year of teaching and the attribution they assign to

these shifts in thinking. It should also elicit perceived areas of gap in their preparation and suggestions for instructional strategies and approaches to be used in literacy preservice education.

Recommendations for further research.

The study of preservice teachers' literacy belief system development is rich with possibilities. Although the research findings resulted in some preliminary recommendations, further research is needed in order to develop a more thorough understanding of the pedagogical support needed by preservice teachers in becoming teachers of reading. There are six main areas recommended for further research: (1) Findings indicate that to promote high levels of understanding, preservice teachers need opportunities to discuss their prior experiences and beliefs about teaching reading in order to fully integrate new information into their schema. The instructional supports that warrant further research include providing PSTs with opportunities to discuss their prior beliefs and experiences *while they are learning about* different and new ways of teaching reading; (2) debriefing of practicum in ways that lead to insights about how PSTs' ideas are shifting/expanding in relation to their early beliefs; (3) this study focused on preservice teachers' evolving understanding of early literacy pedagogy. Additional research could focus on PSTs' evolving understanding of middle years or/and secondary reading pedagogy; (4) comparing whether biographies of early childhood-focused preservice teachers connect more strongly to practice than biographies of middle-years and/or secondary-focused preservice teachers; (5) Sheridan (2016) studied the "optimum" time to introduce and/or challenge PSTs' beliefs in a four year degree. It is recommended that future research investigates the "optimum" times to do so in a 16-month post-degree program; and, (6) longitudinal research into PSTs'

meaning-making processes from beginning of their university preparation into the first 3-5 years of teaching.

Conclusion

My experiences as elementary teacher, mentor teacher, and as a preservice literacy teacher educator for the last 30 years compelled me to undertake this research study. Those experiences indicated to me that prior literacy experiences as students influenced the beliefs, interests, attitudes, and expectations that are brought to the teacher preparation program. I also understood that those beliefs were connected to emotions experienced during the learning to read journey, which are often difficult to change. I was compelled to better understand the processes through which preservice teachers develop understanding of reading pedagogy so that I might be more effective in influencing that understanding in my role as a literacy teacher educator. This descriptive case study revealed that PSTs require multiple opportunities to explicitly unpack their prior beliefs and to debrief practicum experiences as they make sense of their emerging philosophy in regard to the teaching of reading. This study also made some preliminary recommendations for preservice teachers and their instructors by emphasizing the importance of recognizing the role of prior beliefs and systematically unpacking beliefs as they emerge at critical points (course experiences and practicum influences). It is important to uncover, address, and support PSTs in identifying misconceptions about reading pedagogy and forming more accurate conceptions. A collaborative environment with opportunities to discuss and address dissonance in preservice teachers' beliefs about optimal literacy teaching would support preservice teachers toward conceptual changes that make them more equipped as teachers of reading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Recruitment Script – Course Instructor

To be delivered in person by the researcher to the [REDACTED] course instructor.

“I am here to tell you about my current research study and to invite you to participate, if you are interested, in this project. The objective of my research is to investigate preservice teachers’ beliefs and understandings in relation to the teaching of early reading. More specifically, I am interested in exploring what influences the beliefs and understandings about teaching reading that preservice teachers bring to their university preparation and how those influences interact in their developing understanding of how to teach reading while enrolled in a reading processes course like [REDACTED].

This research is important because by having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences interact as preservice teachers become reading teachers, education professors might be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to examine the beliefs that they bring with them to their university preparation and to provide more opportunities for students’ beliefs to interact with new and/or differing perspectives. In this way, education professors might be able to better support preservice students to be more aware and more open to adapt to the changing demands of teaching reading in contemporary times.

You are probably wondering what is involved and how much of a time commitment it will be? The study will run from September to May, [REDACTED]. The eight preservice teachers recruited from your class would be required to meet with me for 3 interviews of approximately 1 hour each at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. They would also be required to write 2 short reflective writings. There is a possibility of a 4th interview the week after the course is over in case I need to clarify some of the information shared. As for you, if you agree to participate, you would meet with me for an interview of approximately 1 hour. The purpose for interviewing you, the course instructor is to help me understand the ideas and concepts that will be covered in this reading course. For the same purpose, I would also request permission to sit and observe the class as a non-participant for a couple of times during the term. I will take notes informally in order to capture the messages, terminology, tone and other contextual factors to better understand the real-world context in which you are developing your understanding of how to teach reading.

There is a possibility of a 2nd interview the week after the course is over in case I need to clarify some of the information shared.

For the preservice teachers, the criteria to be eligible to participate in the study is minimal: (1) they need to be taking a reading processes course, (2) they are interested in teaching reading in grades K to 3, and (3) they are available in person, by phone or skype one week after the course is over in case a 4th interview is needed. The first 8 participants who volunteer and meet the criteria will be selected to take part in the study, or I will do a draw if easier. Each participant in the study, including you, will be given a fake name (a pseudonym) so that no one can identify who said what. This way you can speak freely without having to worry that someone will know what you say. You will also not know who in your class

is participating in the study. If at any point during the study you decide you do not want to be involved anymore, simply let me know and you can stop. Before scheduling each future contact I will remind you of your option to withdraw. If you agree to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form.

I will not use the data collected up to that point from your participation in the study if you do not wish me to. Your information will be destroyed. Participation in this research is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating, you can look through an information flier and a consent form to go over important information and take some time to think about participating without having to do it now. I can also share my research proposal which greatly expands on the specifics of this study the flyer will also contain my contact information so you can easily get in touch with me should you want to participate or have further questions. I will come to your office to collect the consent form when you notify me either by email or phone of your agreement to participate. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer – Course Instructor

Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers
Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading

A research study conducted by Ana Vieira, PhD Candidate, [REDACTED]

This study inquires into preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings about reading, teaching early reading, and what influences those beliefs – both the beliefs that they bring to their university preparation, and those that are developing in the [REDACTED] reading processes course.

- **Who is involved?**

Eight preservice teachers enrolled in [REDACTED], who are primarily interested in teaching reading in grades K to 3, and are available one week after the course is over in case a 4th interview is needed (interviews can take place in person, through Skype or phone call). You, the course instructor will also be interviewed to help me understand the ideas and concepts that will be covered in the reading course other research participants are immersed in.

- **What is involved?**

The eight preservice teachers will be required to meet with me for 3 interviews of approximately 1 hour each at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. They will also be required to write 2 short reflective writings in response to a prompt. There is a possibility of a 4th interview within the week after the course is over. In total, it will be a commitment of approximately 5 hours for the whole term. As for you, the course instructor, you will be required to meet with me for an interview, and a possible second interview, if needed. I will also need your permission to sit and observe the class as a non-participant for a couple of times during the term. I will take notes informally in order to capture the messages, terminology, tone and other contextual factors to better understand the context in which preservice teachers are developing their understanding of how to teach reading.

- **When will this research happen?**

This study will take place mainly during the January - May [REDACTED] term. The interviews of preservice teachers are scheduled to take place with one at the beginning of the term, another around the midway point and the last one at the end of the term. If needed, a fourth interview will take place within a week after the course is over. Preservice teachers will also write two reflective writings. The first short reflective writing will take place beginning of January and the second will take place in early April. The interviews will be conducted at a time, place, and mode that is convenient for both participant and researcher. The course instructor will be interviewed at the beginning of the study and possibly later in the study if needed to help clarify concepts.

- **How can you benefit from participating in this research?**

Your participation in this research will contribute to the body of knowledge about teacher preparation. By having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences

interact as preservice teachers become reading teachers, education professors will be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to examine the beliefs that they bring with them to their university preparation and to provide more opportunities for students' beliefs to interact with new and/or differing perspectives helping them become more aware and more open to adapt to the changing demands of teaching reading in contemporary times.

Participation is completely voluntary. At any point you may withdraw from the study without having to provide a reason. To ensure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will remind you each time we meet and before scheduling each future contact about your option to withdraw from the study with no explanation needed. If you agree to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form.

If you have any questions or are interested in being part of this study please contact Ana Vieira at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], or my PhD supervisor: Dr. Ruthanne Tobin [REDACTED], [REDACTED]



Appendix C

Consent Form (Course Instructor)

Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading* that is being conducted by Ana Vieira. Ana Vieira is a PhD candidate in the [REDACTED]. You may contact me if you have further questions by email [REDACTED] or by phone [REDACTED].

As a graduate student I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction. My research is being conducted under the supervision of **Dr. Ruthanne Tobin**. You may contact her at [REDACTED].

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objectives of this research are to investigate preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings in relation to the pedagogy of reading by exploring what influences those beliefs and understandings and how those influences interact in preservice teachers' developing understanding of how to teach reading while enrolled in a reading processes course. The primary research question is: *What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?*

Importance of this Research

This research is important because it provides education leaders with insight and understanding into what influences preservice students' beliefs and understanding of how to teach reading in contemporary times and how those influences interact in that developing understanding. This is important because by having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences interact as preservice students become reading teachers, education professors will be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to be aware of the beliefs they bring with them to their teacher preparation program and to provide many opportunities for students' beliefs to interact with new and differing perspectives. As institutions preparing students who are becoming reading teachers, Faculties of Education, offer an optimal milieu to provide students with opportunities for belief exploration and 'disequilibrium' through coursework, especially as they attempt to support students to adapt to the demands of teaching literacy in the 21st century.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are the instructor for the reading course (██████████) from which participants (preservice teachers) are being recruited. Your role as the instructor will permit you to help contextualize and clarify intention of concepts covered in the course.

What is Involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in one interview (about one hour long). There is a possibility of participation in a second interview, if needed. The interview(s) will take place at a time and place that is convenient to you. Audio recording and written notes will be made of the interview(s) with your permission (see permission section below). Transcripts will be made to aid in the analysis process. I will also ask your permission to observe two classes and to review your course syllabus and course textbook.

Inconvenience

Participation in this research may cause some inconvenience to you in the time commitment required to participate in the different aspects of the research.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. If at any time you would like to withdraw, you may do so with no questions asked. Any collected data that you have shared up to that point can either be destroyed or included in the research as per your request.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a contribution to the body of information related to improving effectiveness in teacher preparation for teaching reading in digital times.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data to be included in the study up to that point. If you agree, I will have you sign the consent form with a note explaining this arrangement. If no, all data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

On-going Consent

To ensure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will remind you before scheduling each future contact about your option to withdraw from the study with no explanation needed. If you agree to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form (see below).

Anonymity

To protect your anonymity, you will choose a pseudonym that will be used to refer to you in the research.

Confidentiality

There are some limits to confidentiality to your participation in this study due to the selection method and the nature of the size of the sample from which participants are drawn. However, the researcher will make all attempts to maximize anonymity. Any information you provide will be anonymous and it will not lead to your identification as a participant in the study. You will choose the pseudonym by which you will be identified in the research. Affiliation with a specific class, university, or other identifying details will not be shared in order to maximize anonymity and confidentiality. All print and physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked research office on campus. All electronic data (emails including comments on the interviews and attachments of the reflective writings, if you choose the electronic format) will be stored on password-protected computer. The researcher uses an email account run by the [REDACTED] to ensure security for the data. You need to be aware that a transcriptionist will be used in the research and they will have access to confidential and private recorded data related to the research. They will sign a confidentiality agreement in advance of working with any data.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: in class discussions, a dissertation format which will be online through the D-Space site where [REDACTED] dissertations are housed, in scholarly presentations at educational conferences, and through publication in scholarly journals.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in the following ways: Paper notes, transcripts, etc. will be shredded. Computer data files will be deleted. Online data will be deleted.

Contacts

Individuals who may be contacted regarding this study include Ana Vieira and Dr. Ruthanne Tobin. Please see their contact information at the beginning of this form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office [REDACTED]

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Future Use of Data

Participants consent to information relating to the study to be used in the future for:

- Educational purposes (class presentations, scholarly conference presentations, academic publications).
- Further research projects that have ethics approval.
- Words from participants' responses can be used as part of the researcher's dissertation and thus will be available online through D-Space.

Please select statement:

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

ON-GOING CONSENT:

INTERVIEW 1

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

INTERVIEW 2 (if needed)

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND THE ORIGINAL WILL BE TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER.

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment Script

I am here to tell you about my current research study and to invite you to participate, if you are interested.

The objective of my research is to investigate preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings in relation to the teaching of reading. Preservice teachers are students like yourselves who are working through their university preparation in order to become qualified teachers.

I am interested in exploring what influences the beliefs and understandings about teaching reading that you bring to your university preparation and how those influences interact in your developing understanding of how to teach reading while enrolled in a reading processes course like ██████████ which you will be taking next term.

I am looking for participation from 8 preservice teachers. The criteria to be eligible to participate in the study is minimal: (1) you need to be taking a reading processes course, which you all will be, (2) you are interested in teaching reading in grades K to 3, and (3) you are available in person, by phone or Skype one week after the course is over in case a 4th interview is needed. The first 8 participants who volunteer and meet the criteria will be selected to take part in the study. If easier, we can do a draw to determine who will participate. The course instructor for ██████████ will also be interviewed but only to help clarify context for the study.

You are probably wondering what is involved and how much of a time commitment it will be? The study will run for the duration of approximately one term. In total, each participant would be required to meet with me for 3 interviews of approximately 45 minutes each at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. I will do the first interview while you are still in ██████████, probably in a couple of weeks, and then only two interviews while you are taking ██████████. You will also be required to write 2 short reflective writings. We can meet here at ██████████ at a time that is convenient for you or, if not possible, maybe we can talk through Skype. The reflective writings are done by you at a place of your choosing. I will also be interviewing your ██████████ course instructor in order to help me understand the ideas and concepts that will be covered in this reading course. For the same purpose, I will also sit and observe the class as a non-participant for a couple of times during the term. I will take notes informally in order to capture the messages, terminology, tone and other contextual factors to better understand the real-world context in which you are developing your understanding of how to teach reading. There is a possibility of a 4th interview the week after the course is over in case I need to clarify some of the information shared.

Slide

Each participant will be given a fake name (a pseudonym) so that no one can identify who said what. This way you can speak freely without having to worry that someone will know what you say. Your professor will not know who is participating in the study. If at any point during the study you decide you do not want to be involved anymore, simply let me know and you can stop. Before scheduling each future contact I will remind you of your option to withdraw. If you agree

to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form. I will not use the data collected up to that point from your participation in the study if you do not wish me to. Your information will be destroyed. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and your choice to either participate, or not participate, has no bearing on your grade or participation in the [REDACTED] course.

Slide

There are a few benefits to participating in this study. You will be given the opportunity to reflect, articulate, and justify your beliefs and understandings about reading and the teaching of reading. This will most likely provide you a deeper understanding of who you are as readers and teachers of readers, as well as insight into your future practice. At the same time, your participation in this research will add to the body of knowledge about teacher preparation. This research is important because by having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences interact as preservice teachers like you become reading teachers, education professors will be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to examine the beliefs that they bring with them to their university preparation and to provide more opportunities for students' beliefs to interact with new and/or differing perspectives. In this way, education professors might be able to better support preservice students to be more aware and more open to adapt to the changing demands of teaching reading in contemporary times.

Anyone who is interested can take an information flier and a consent form to go over important information and take some time to think about participating without having to do it now. The flyer will also contain my contact information so you can easily get in touch with me should you want to participate or have further questions. I will arrange a way to collect the consent forms for those who agree to participate. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix E
Recruitment Flyer – Preservice Teachers

Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers
Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading

A Research Study conducted by Ana Vieira, PhD Candidate, [REDACTED]

This study inquires into preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings about reading, teaching reading, and what influences those beliefs. As you are a preservice teacher, I am interested in exploring what influences **your** beliefs and understandings about the teaching of reading – both those beliefs that you bring to your university preparation, and those that are developing during the [REDACTED] reading processes course.

- **Who is involved?**

Eight preservice teachers who will be enrolled in [REDACTED] next term, who are primarily interested in teaching reading in grades K to 3, and are available one week after the course is over in case a 4th interview is needed (availability after the course can be through Skype or phone call). The course instructor will also be interviewed once.

- **What is involved?**

You would be required to meet with me for 3 interviews of approximately 45 minutes each. The first interview will take place at the end of the current term and the other two will take place in the middle and end of next term. These interviews can occur on campus, through Skype or phone. You will also be required to write 2 short reflective writings in response to a prompt. There is a possibility of a 4th interview within the week after the course is over. I will also sit and observe the class as a non-participant for a couple of times during the term. I will take notes informally in order to capture the messages, terminology, tone and other contextual factors to better understand the real-world context in which you are developing your understanding of how to teach reading.

- **When will this research happen?**

This study will take place from September [REDACTED] to May [REDACTED]. The interviews are scheduled to take place with one at the end of the current term, another around the midway point and the last one at the end of the next term. If needed, a fourth interview will take place within a week after the course is over and before practicum begins. The first short reflective writing will take place at the end of January and the second will take place in early April. The interviews will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for both participant and researcher.

- **How can you benefit from participating in this research?**

Your participation will allow you with informal opportunities to reflect, articulate, and justify your beliefs and understandings about reading and the teaching of reading. This will most likely provide you a deeper understanding of who you are as a reader and teacher of readers, as well as insight into your future practice and how you can be a more effective teacher of reading.

At the same time, your participation in this research will contribute to the body of knowledge about teacher preparation. By having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences interact as preservice teachers become reading teachers, education professors will be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to examine the beliefs that they bring with them to their university preparation and to provide more opportunities for students' beliefs to interact with new and/or differing perspectives helping them become more aware and more open to adapt to the changing demands of teaching reading in contemporary times.

Participation is completely voluntary. Your participation will remain anonymous. At any point you may withdraw from the study without having to provide a reason. To ensure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will remind you each time we meet and before scheduling each future contact about your option to withdraw from the study with no explanation needed. If you agree to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form. Participation in the study will not affect your marks or standing in [REDACTED] in any way.

If you have any questions or are interested in being part of this study please contact Ana Vieira at [REDACTED], or my PhD supervisor: Dr. Ruthanne Tobin [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Appendix F

Participant Consent Form (Preservice Teachers)

Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading* that is being conducted by Ana Vieira.

Ana Vieira is a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the [REDACTED]. You may contact me if you have further questions by email [REDACTED].

As a graduate student I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction. My research is being conducted under the supervision of **Dr. Ruthanne Tobin**. You may contact her at [REDACTED].

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objectives of this research are to investigate preservice teachers' beliefs and understandings in relation to the pedagogy of reading by exploring what influences those beliefs and understandings and how those influences interact in preservice teachers' developing understanding of how to teach reading while enrolled in a reading processes course. The primary research question is: *What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?*

Importance of this Research

This research is important because it provides education leaders with insight and understanding into what influences selected preservice students' beliefs and understanding of how to teach reading in contemporary times and how those influences interact in that developing understanding. This is important because by having a better understanding of the type of influences and how those influences interact as preservice students become reading teachers, education professors will be more effective in encouraging preservice teachers to be aware of the beliefs they bring with them to their teacher preparation program and to provide many opportunities for students' beliefs to interact with new and differing perspectives as they attempt to support students to adapt to the demands of teaching literacy in the 21st century.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as someone who is enrolled in a reading processes course, is interested in teaching reading in grades K to 3, and is available to participate in three or four interviews and two reflective writings during this fall term.

What is Involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in three or four interviews (about 1 hour long each) and to write two short reflective writings (300 – 500 words). There is a possibility of participation in a fourth interview one week after the course is over. The interviews will take place at a time and place that is convenient to you. Audio recording and written notes will be made of the interviews with your permission (see permission section below). Transcripts will be made to aid in the analysis process.

Inconvenience

Participation in this research may cause some inconvenience to you in the time commitment required to participate in the different aspects of the research (about 5 hours).

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. If at any time you would like to withdraw, you may do so with no questions asked. Any collected data that you have shared up to that point can either be destroyed or included in the research as per your request.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a deeper understanding of who you are as a reader and teacher of reading as well as insight into your future practice. You will also be contributing to the body of information related to improving effectiveness in teacher preparation for teaching reading in digital times.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data to be included in the study up to that point. If you agree, I will have you sign the consent form with a note explaining this arrangement. If no, all data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

On-going Consent

To ensure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will remind you each time we meet and before scheduling each future contact about your option to withdraw from the study with no explanation needed. If you agree to continued participation in the study you will sign consent in the respective signature line in the initial consent form (see below).

Anonymity

To protect your anonymity you will choose a pseudonym that will be used to refer to you in the research.

Confidentiality

There are some limits to confidentiality to your participation in this study due to the nature of the size of the sample from which participants are drawn. However, the researcher will make all attempts to maximize anonymity. Any information you provide will be anonymous and it will not lead to your identification as a participant in the study. Your professor will not know that you are participating in the study. You will choose the pseudonym by which you will be identified in the research. Affiliation with a specific class, university, or other identifying details will not be shared in order to maximize anonymity and confidentiality. All print and physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked research office on campus. All electronic data (emails including comments on the interviews and attachments of the reflective writings, if you choose the electronic format) will be stored on password-protected computer. The researcher uses an email account run by the [REDACTED] to ensure security for the data. You need to be aware that a transcriptionist might be used in the research and they will have access to confidential and private recorded data related to the research. They will sign a confidentiality agreement in advance of working with any data.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: in a dissertation format which will be online through the D-Space site where [REDACTED] dissertations are housed, in scholarly presentations at educational conferences, and through publication in scholarly journals.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in the following ways: Paper notes, transcripts, etc. will be shredded. Computer data files will be deleted. Online data will be deleted.

Contacts

Individuals who may be contacted regarding this study include Ana Vieira and Dr. Ruthanne Tobin. Please see their contact information at the beginning of this form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at [REDACTED]

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Future Use of Data

Participants' consent to information relating to the study to be used in the future for:

- Educational purposes (class presentations, scholarly conference presentations, academic publications).
- Further research projects that have ethics approval.
- Words from participants' responses can be used as part of the researcher's dissertation and thus will be available online through D-Space.

Please select statement:

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

ON-GOING CONSENT:

INTERVIEW 1

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

INTERVIEW 2

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

INTERVIEW 3

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

INTERVIEW 4 (if needed)

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A COPY WILL BE TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER.

Appendix G

Interview Questions (Course Instructor)

Autobiographical: Reading history

What do you remember about learning to read?

How did you learn to read?

How old were you?

What materials did you use?

Who helped you learn to read?

In relation to reading, describe the environment at your home growing up (amount of books? Parents reading habits? Routines)

In relation to reading, describe the environment for learning at your school.

Which strategies do you remember your teachers using in teaching reading?

Which did you like? Which did you dislike?

What experiences were most significant in your past (both positive and negative) to how you feel about reading and about the teaching of reading?

What people, if any, were most significant in your past (both positive and negative) to how you feel about reading and about the teaching of reading?

Autobiographical: Present Understandings as a Reader

What is reading to you?

What do you read?

What do you enjoy reading? What do you dislike?

Where do you like reading?

How do you prefer to read? (book, ebook, audiobook, etc)

What types of routines or habits do you have in relation to reading?

Autobiographical: Present Understandings about Teaching Reading

How do children learn to read?

What do you think children are reading nowadays?

Who do you think your students are? Their reading experiences, interests, skills, beliefs.

What are you most afraid/anxious of as a professor of reading instruction?

Complete the metaphors: 1) Reading is... 2) Teaching reading is... Explain your metaphors.

Concepts highlighted in Coursework about the Teaching of Reading

In the design of this course, what are the main concepts you feel are important for preservice teachers to understand?

What are some strategies you use to ensure preservice teachers understand those concepts?

How will you try to know how the students are interacting with the concepts presented in class?

Agreeing/disagreeing

What activities or strategies, if any, do you use to find out what your students' beliefs about the teaching of reading are?

Do you feel it is important or necessary for you to find out what beliefs your students have about teaching reading? Why? Why not?

Appendix H
Data Sources Detailed Information

Main research question: <i>What do the biographies and reflections from participation in a reading course and practicum reveal about the development of three preservice teachers' ongoing understanding of how to teach reading?</i>		
<i>their biographies</i>	<i>their reflections on participation in a reading processes course</i>	<i>their reflections on their practicum?</i>
Data Sources	Data Sources	Data Sources
<p><u>Interview #1</u> <i>I Autobiographical: Reading history</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you remember about learning to read? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How did you learn to read? b) How old were you? c) Who helped you learn to read? d) What materials did you use? 2. What experiences were most significant in your past, both positive and negative, to how you feel about reading? 3. What people, if any, were most significant in your past, both positive and negative, to how you feel about reading? 4. In relation to reading, describe the environment for learning at your school? What teaching strategies do you remember your teachers using in teaching you reading? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Which strategies did you like? b) Which strategies did you dislike? <p>In relation to reading, describe the environment at your home? (amount of books? parents reading habits? routines?)</p> <p><i>II Autobiographical: Present Understandings as a Reader</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is reading to you? How do you feel about reading? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What types of materials do you read? b) What do you enjoy reading? c) What do you dislike reading? d) Where do you like reading? Where do you do most of your reading? e) Approximately, how many books do you own? 2. How do you get most of your reading material? (buy, library, e-books, books, internet, etc) 3. How do you prefer to read? (book, e-book, computer, audiobook, etc) 	<p><u>Interview #2</u> <i>I. Influence of Coursework on Understandings about the Teaching of Reading</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your experiences in learning about teaching reading in your coursework so far? 2. How is the preservice reading course affecting your understanding of how to teach reading? 3. What aspects/concepts in your course have: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Been most significant to you? b) Which concepts do you fully agree with? c) Which concepts do you disagree with? 4. What concepts/aspects covered in the course so far confirm your original beliefs about reading? 5. Is the reading course contributing to any changes in your prior beliefs about reading and teaching reading? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) If so, in what ways? b) Do you do the course readings? c) Which are challenging those beliefs? 6. What are you getting from the class that is helping you to grow as a teacher or reader? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What has changed in your understanding? b) What has not changed? <hr/> <p><u>Reflective Writing #2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the preservice reading processes course affect your understanding of how to teach reading? • What aspects/concepts in the course were most significant to you? 	<p><u>Interview #3</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your practicum placement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grade - How many students - Needs in the classroom - Teaching assignments - Learning environment, routines, tone - Literacy program, teaching of reading 2. Describe how you taught literacy? Reading? 3. Did you feel prepared? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What do you think prepared you? Coursework? b) Previous teachers and experiences in your own schooling? 4. As you were teaching, what did you feel were the strongest influences on your planning, on the choice of activities, on your teaching style? 5. How have your experiences in the reading processes course influenced or not influenced you? 6. How have your views on teaching reading changed as a result of participating in a reading course? What has not changed? 7. How have your views on teaching reading changed as a result of your practicum experience? What has not changed? 8. Do you have new understandings of reading that you did not have before the reading course or the practicum? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What have you learned that you did not know before? b) What questions do you have now that you did not have before?

<p>4. What types of routines or habits do you have in relation to reading?</p> <p><i>III Autobiographical: Present Understandings about Teaching Reading</i></p> <p>1. In your opinion, how do children learn to read? What is your theory of reading?</p> <p>a) How will you teach children how to read? (Your intended approach)</p> <p>b) Describe some of the teaching strategies you will use in teaching reading.</p> <p>c) Describe the classroom environment that will facilitate the teaching of reading (amount of time, resources, class layout, class management, routines, etc)</p> <p>2. Read the following statements (handout quiz) and rate your agreement with them.</p> <p>3. What do you think your future students will be like? (Their reading experiences, their interests, their skills).</p> <p>a) What do you believe children are reading nowadays?</p> <p>4. What excites you most as a teacher of reading?</p> <p>5. What are you most afraid/anxious of as a teacher of reading?</p> <p>6. Complete the metaphors: 1) Reading is... 2) Teaching reading is... Explain your metaphors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the reading course contribute to any changes in your prior beliefs about reading and teaching reading? If so, in what ways? <p>What has remained the same about your beliefs prior to starting the course?</p>	<p>9. What are you still most afraid of as a teacher of reading?</p> <p>10. What do you still need to feel confident as a teacher of reading?</p> <p>11. From your initial beliefs at the beginning of the study, what do you still believe strongly about the teaching of reading?</p> <p>a) Have there been other aspects you believed before that you do not feel are as important or accurate anymore?</p> <p>b) Have there been ideas or strategies about teaching reading presented in the course or in your practicum that you reject or disagree with?</p> <p>12. How would you describe your journey so far:</p> <p>a) How your initial beliefs have interacted with information presented in the reading processes course?</p> <p>b) In the practicum experience?</p> <p>13. After a reading processes course and a practicum experience, complete the metaphors: 1) Reading is... 2) Teaching reading is... Explain your metaphors.</p> <p>14. How has participation in this study impacted you in your journey towards becoming a teacher of reading?</p>
<p><u>Reflective Writing #1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • past influences (people/ experiences/etc) on your present understanding about teaching reading? • a description of how those influences have contributed to your present understanding about teaching reading. • your present understanding about teaching reading 	<p><u>Class Observations #1 & #2</u></p> <p>Lesson topics</p> <p>Lesson objectives</p> <p>Main concepts presented by instructor</p> <p>Questions/Discussions</p> <p><u>Review of course documents: syllabus, textbooks</u></p>	

Appendix I
Email Script for Interviews

Dear _____,

I would like to schedule the next interview, if possible. You know that at any time you have the option to withdraw from the study without having to provide an explanation. You can just reply to this email to let me know. If you consent to continue participating in the study and to meet for the next interview, I will ask you to sign the interview line in the consent form when we meet.

Please provide a few dates and times that you are available to meet in person, through Skype or phone call for one hour in the week of _____.

If you prefer to meet at another place other than the [REDACTED], please let me know.

Thank you so much.

Ana Vieira

Appendix J
Confidentiality Agreement – Transcriptionist

**Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers
Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading**

1. Confidential Information

The *Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading* Research Project hereby confirms that it will disclose certain of its confidential and proprietary information to their interview transcriptionist, _____

Confidential information shall include all data, materials, products, technology, computer programs, specifications, manuals, software and other information disclosed or submitted orally, in writing, or by any other media to _____ by _____.

2. Obligations of Transcriptionist

A. _____ hereby agrees that the confidential *Becoming a Teacher of Reading: Preservice Teachers Develop Their Understanding of Teaching Reading* research project is to be used solely for the purposes of said study. Said confidential information should only be disclosed to employees of said research study with a specific need to know.

_____ hereby agrees not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from ANA VIEIRA, or other participants of the project, to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of ANA VIEIRA.

B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a safe location so as to avoid third persons unrelated to the project to access said materials. Confidential Information shall not be duplicated by _____ except for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. Completion of the Work

Upon the completion of the work and at the request of ANA VIEIRA, _____ shall return all confidential information received in written or tangible form, including copies, or reproductions or other media containing such confidential information, within ten (10) days of such request.

At ANA VIEIRA's option, any copies of confidential documents or other media developed by _____ and remaining in her/his possession after the completion of her/his work, need to be destroyed so as to protect the confidentiality of said information. _____ shall provide a written certificate to Owner regarding destruction within ten (10) days thereafter.

With his/her signature, _____ shall hereby adhere to the terms of this agreement.

Signature

Date

Appendix K

Email Script for Reflective Writings

Dear _____,

I am going to send you the _____ reflective writing prompt. You know that at any time you have the option to withdraw from the study without having to provide an explanation. You can just reply to this email to let me know. Completion of the reflective writing will indicate your ongoing consent to continue in the study. Please write and submit the reflective writing during the week of _____. All instructions are on the form, but you can always contact me if you require further clarification.

Thank you so much.

Ana Vieira

Appendix L
Prompted Reflective Writings - 1

Prompt 1

The purpose of this written exercise is to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your past experiences with reading that have shaped how YOU feel and think about reading (in about 500 words).

Some of the prompts that can guide your reflection:

- What reading means to you
- Experiences that have helped you or hindered you in your feelings about reading, in your reading development
- Influential people in your life (relating to reading, of course) and how they influenced you
- Your thoughts about teaching reading
- What anxieties, if any, do you have about teaching reading
- What type of teacher of reading do you want to be
- Goals you have to support you in becoming that teacher you want to be

These prompts are just a guideline for your reflection feel free to add or delete to ensure that your reflection is true to you.

Appendix M
Prompted Reflective Writings – 2

Prompt 2

The purpose of this exercise is to provide you with an opportunity to articulate YOUR perspective on teaching reading, at this moment in time (in about 500 words).

I would like you to answer the following headings in your response:

What do you think reading is?

How do children learn to read?

How should we teach reading?

Try to ensure that your reflection is true to you.

Appendix N
Class Observation Sheet

Class _____ Date _____

Lesson topics _____

Lesson objectives _____

Main concepts presented by instructor

Research participants' questions:

Participants' discussion:

Other comments:

Quotes: